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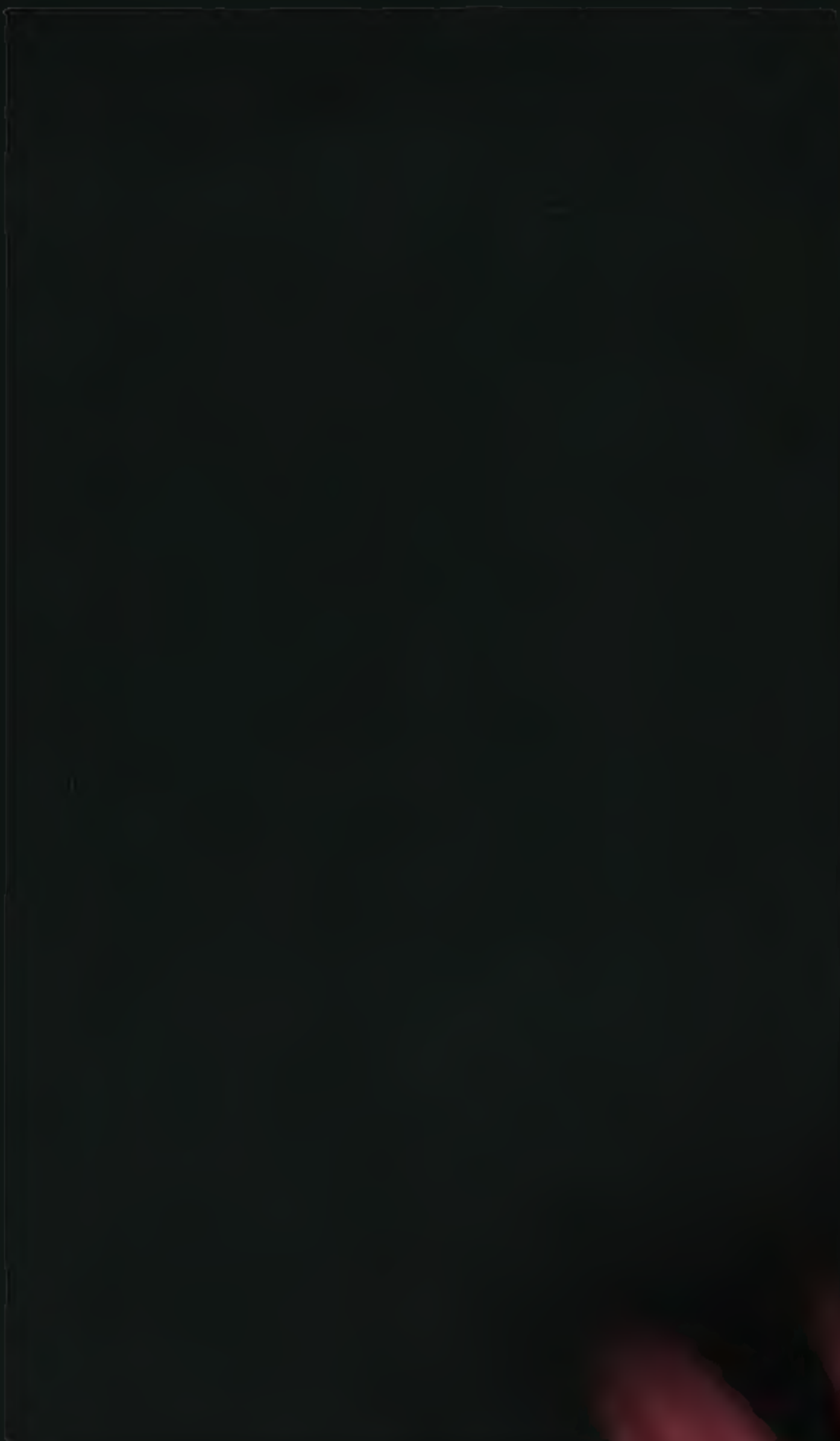
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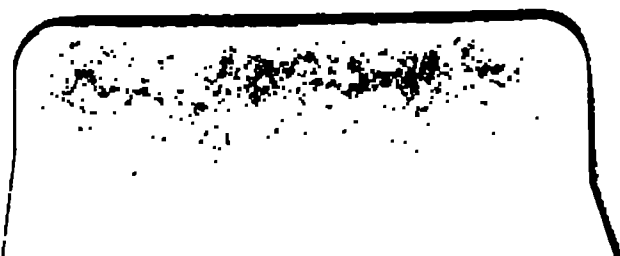
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**LONGINUS**  
**ON**  
**THE SUBLIME**



LONGINUS  
ON  
THE SUBLIME

TRANSLATED BY

THOMAS R. R. STEBBING M.A.

*Fellow and Tutor of Worcester  
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## PREFACE.

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**THERE** are many reasons why this book should be valuable, if, as a preliminary to conferring advantages, it secures that distinction for itself, which in literature is the primary one, and above all others essential to value,—the tribute of the reader's time, together with the homage of his attention. The treatise for which I make this claim discusses an important subject ; it is distinguished at once for its brevity and fulness ; its precepts many times are practically illustrated by the manner of conveying them ; the style is moulded after great exemplars ; the sentiments

interspersed among its rules of art have themselves that moral grandeur without which even the highest genius cannot rise into sublimity; its criticisms are almost invariably just, acute, and penetrating, and there is this nobility of feeling conspicuous in them all, that their praise and censure go hand in hand. It is not the way of Longinus to cull the absurdities and faults of any writer, unless he can also praise him for some quality of excellence or gather from his works some passage to be commended. There is a certain heroism in conduct of this sort, when a man will grapple with none but a worthy antagonist, and rightly feels that a composition, which is not worth praising, is likewise not worth abusing.

The word, which has given a title to the work and a glorious epithet to its author, is the translation of a Greek substantive which means in the first instance simply "height." That simple expression of a physical relation easily adapts itself to the most stupendous concep-

tions; it supplies, for instance, in Isaiah, the basis of the divine comparison, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts;" the "high hand" is the symbol of power irresistible; the "king that is higher than Agag" is the Lord of the whole earth. The "height" of which Longinus has written touches indeed, as he shews, sublimity in general, the moral as well as the intellectual Sublime; but his especial branch of the subject is elevation of style, loftiness and grandeur of language, the attainment in the spoken or the written thought of splendour and magnificence and awe-commanding majesty. He seeks to lay down rules, to set forth examples, to explain the means, whereby the mind that has in it any spark of native genius, any self-consciousness of noble capacity, may rise above the common level, and spurning even the middle flight of ordinary ambition, wing its soaring way into "the empyreal air."

The treatise of Longinus, then, is a treatise upon oratory, a treatise upon eloquence in general, a discussion of the supreme excellence of language attainable or to be aimed at either in "prose or numerous verse." But while framing its canon of the Sublime from the masterpieces of antiquity, it so unfolds the secret springs of success as to encourage all noble endeavour, even on the part of those who cannot hope to approach or equal the few masterminds, who seem, in the marvellous originality of their genius, not so much to have obeyed the rules of Art, as, by their own performances, to have given Art her laws.

The Englishman, dull and unready in conversation, not eager for amusements, caring for few things but his business and his fireside, is nevertheless not merely open to the influences of eloquence, not merely keenly alive to its excitement, but beyond all other men seeks it as his necessary intellectual aliment, bows down either to the reality or the semblance of it, and

orders his life according to its dictation. In England the education of the multitude is effected (or has been hitherto) not so much by national schools and regular teaching, as by newspaper eloquence; the government of the country is entrusted, sometimes indeed to one party and sometimes to another, but always to the ablest parliamentary speakers; the limits of the national church are maintained and extended, not by its rich and dignified benefices,—for on what principle are they distributed?—not by the splendour of its ceremonial, for there is no such splendour existing; not by the superstition of ages, for its faith is challenged unceasingly; but, if we look only to second causes, in the main by the voices and the writings of its preachers and apologists. Accepting it therefore as an axiom that noble expression is the outcome and bloom of lofty thoughts, and that grand thoughts spring only from great and exalted minds, we may trace an immediate connection between the object of this treatise and the well-

being of our country. And though it be true that many noble-minded men cannot express their thoughts with corresponding eloquence, it is no less true that it would be a great boon for the world if they could; and that in a nation like our own, wherein so much depends on this capacity, it is a culpable piece of indolence to neglect its cultivation, and a lamentable error to suppose that one of the noblest and most powerful faculties of our nature is improper to be used in defence of reason and religion, because it is sometimes exerted, and, partly from this very mistake, exerted successfully, to their hindrance and discredit. For let this be borne in mind, that if truth and falsehood, the honourable and the base, wisdom and foolishness, be equally drawn by the highest skill of eloquence, and with her fairest colours, the pigments used in portraying truth and virtue and good counsel, being mixed with the sunshine of their inborn godlikeness, will infallibly cause every rival hue to pale before them by the

sweetness and the splendour of that internal illumination.

The Longinus of history is as noble in character as this work is admirable in its precepts. Nevertheless it should not be concealed that his claim to the authorship of this characteristic performance has of late been questioned though not disproved. The remains of his writings however are so extremely scanty that the question thus raised must probably remain for ever in abeyance. A solitary manuscript has preserved to us this immortal fragment, but the profane hand of Time, like Diomede wounding the gods, has been able to impair although not to destroy it. In two or three places the M.S. fails altogether; in three or four others its readings seem to warrant the hazardous attempt at emendation. In one or two isolated instances the author illustrates his own maxim that absolute exemption from faults is not an attribute of the highest genius.



As a translator I owe my acknowledgments to the Latin Version by N. Morus, and in an ampler degree to the copious and learned notes of Ruhnken and others, laboriously compiled and revised by Benjamin Weiske, who appears to have died, pen in hand, while engaged in the task of arranging them. In revising my own performance, I have read with pleasure the elegant French translation by Boileau, and have further compared it with an English rendering by a Rev. William Smith, dated 1739.

In the illustrative notes which I have with some diffidence, and, I fear, with some presumption, appended, I have thought it proper, with regard to an English translation, to confine myself almost entirely to English literature. From a wider range, both within that circle and without it, to gather illustrations more apt and more noble, may be offered as an exercise to the student, or an amusement to the learned. By this means some may find in the vacant margin the most useful part of the volume ;

and, however unworthy that volume may be, all who are dissatisfied with the taste of the translator will at least be able to enrich it, if they please, from the choicer resources of their own.

THOMAS R. R. STEBBING.

*Worcester College, Oxford,*

*May 30, 1867.*



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## I.

*The Author's reason for writing this Treatise :—also, the characteristics of Sublimity.*

YOU remember, my dear Terentianus, when we together examined the short treatise of Cæcilius on the Sublime, we thought it inadequate to the dignity of the subject; it seemed neither to grasp the essential points, nor to compass all that profit for its readers which should be an author's paramount aim. Moreover, in all writing upon art there are two requisites; the first, to state clearly what is the subject matter; the second, which for importance would be first, to assign the means and various methods by which a command over it can be obtained. Yet Cæcilius, who spares no pains to enlighten our ignorance on the nature of his subject, strangely thought

it needless to explain by what plan we might exalt our own capacities to the heights of that sublimity. But perhaps after all, he deserves rather to be praised for his conception and diligence, than blamed for his omissions. Since, however, you would have it that, if only to please you, I also should write a commentary on the Sublime, let us examine whether there really is in my speculations anything serviceable to orators or public men; and do you, my friend, assist me at every step with that impartiality of judgment, which is as becoming to you as it is habitual; for surely it was well said by the thinker of old that if in anything we men can be like the gods, it is "in charity and in truth."<sup>a</sup>

In writing to a man of your erudition, I need scarcely premise, except in the briefest manner, that the Sublime is a supreme excellence and perfection of language; and that by this, and this alone, the greatest writers in poetry and

---

<sup>a</sup> *A saying of Pythagoras quoted in Ælian. V. H. xii. 59.*

prose achieved their preëminence, and won for their own reputations the guerdon of immortality. For majesty and grandeur persuade not, but astound; and the marvellous has a gift of producing amazement with which persuasiveness and attraction can never cope, so long as yielding to persuasion depends for the most part on ourselves, while those other forces, with tyranny and might irresistible, bend every hearer to their will. Again, the skill of the conception, the arrangement and distribution of the parts, obviously cannot be exhibited by any one or two isolated passages of a work, but must be shewn, if at all, by the fabric at large; whereas there never was a timely utterance of the Sublime that did not like a thunderbolt scatter all in its way, and reveal in a single moment the congregated powers of the orator. At least I imagine, my dear Terentianus, that the dictates of your own experience would in all essential points corroborate these observations.

## II.

*Can Sublimity be taught?*

Now the question which meets us at the outset is this: whether elevation of style and the reverse can be reduced to rule, since some think it an utter delusion to apply the precepts of art to this kind of subject. For sublimity, they say, is the gift of Nature, not the result of teaching, and the only art which leads to it is native genius. The effects of natural abilities, they think, are impaired and altogether weakened under the debilitating influence of systematic rules. But I maintain, that to be convinced of the contrary, one has but to consider that what Nature loves in impassioned and exalted moods is a general independence, not a random course without plan or direction ; and that while Nature supplies

in all cases primary and archetypal elements of production, it is system which avails to point out the needful limitations, the seasonable opportunity, in short, to bring together all the proprieties of use and practice; and that genius without science, left alone with no ballast or ought to steady it, upon its own mere impulse and undisciplined impetuosity, has an inherent liability to shipwreck. For genius, be assured, requires the curb as often as the spur. For as Demosthenes remarks of life in general, that “chief among blessings is good fortune, but second thereto, or even equal, is good counsel,”<sup>b</sup> seeing that men without the latter must inevitably forfeit also the former, so might we say as to the use of language, that natural talent answers to good fortune, and the teaching of art to good counsel. And indeed for the leading fact itself, that there is that in oratory which Nature can alone supply, we are indebted to none other than

---

<sup>b</sup> *Speech against Aristocrates*, p. 658, *ed. Reiske*.

the teaching of art. Upon a due consideration, as I said, of these particulars, the censor of the studios will no longer, I believe, deem the investigation of our present subject superfluous or unprofitable.

## III.

*On Bombast, Affectation, and forced Emotion.*

\* \* \* \* \*

“Yea, let them quench their hearth-fire’s mightest beam;  
For should but smoke be lingering on that hearth,  
I, mingling it with torrent-wreath of flame,  
Will make their home a blazing heap of ruin.—  
Nor hath my grandest strain yet utterance found.”\*

THIS ceases to be tragedy, and becomes bombast, with its “wreaths of flame,” “outspueing to the sky,” its “piping Boreas,” and the rest.

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\* The commencement of this chapter is wanting in the original. The poetical fragment is supposed to come from a lost play by Æschylus, called “The Orithyia.” It may be well illustrated, as Ruhnken observes, by the speech of Boreas in Ovid, *Metam.* vi. 687. The North Wind expresses his rage at being denied the maiden of his choice, and his determination at length to have recourse to his natural weapons which he had laid aside during his courtship. Supposing this to be the position, we may gather the sense of the bombastic fragment before us. He would blow the very smoke into a flame, forsooth, to consume the dwelling, and, after that, he had some more terrible blast in reserve, unless, we may presume, his suit had in the meantime been successful.



The passage is marred by the verbiage, and instead of gathering awe, gathers nothing but confusion from the various images, each of which, as it comes under the light of criticism, begins to decline from the terrible to the ridiculous.\* But if inordinate inflation of style is unpardonable even in tragedy, the native element for pomp and grandeur of diction, how much more must it be inappropriate in the language of reality. Hence Gorgias of Leontini is laughed at for calling Xerxes "the Jove of the Persians," and vultures "living tombs;"† Callisthenes, for passages which have nothing of the spiritual but a want of solidity; and still

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\* In Macpherson's *Ossian* the reader has continually to decide between sublimity and fustian, when 'the edges of the clouds are tinged with lightning,' when 'Hidalla's bushy hair sighs in the wind,' or when 'the dreadful spirit of Loda comes in the roar of a thousand storms, and scatters battles from his eyes.'

† Cowley, contrasting whales with minnows, calls the former, "living islands." How Milton handles the like comparison, without the least touch of the burlesque, may be seen in his "*Paradise Lost*," i. 204.

more Cleitarchus, who is in truth a blustering performer, puffing away, as one might say with Sophocles,

“Small though his pipe, with full-distended cheek.”  
Amphicrates, Hegesias, and Matris are other cases in point; for often when they fancy themselves in an ecstatic rapture, instead of writing under inspiration, they are talking nonsense.

Certainly bombast seems to be one of the snares most difficult to avoid. For men ambitious of eloquence, in seeking to escape from a flat prosaic style, almost inevitably split upon this rock, trusting to the proverb, “Aim highly, fall nobly.” But like tumours in the body, all unsubstantial and illusory inflation in style is mischievous, and productive of effects the opposite of those intended; for “nothing,” they say, “is drier than a dropsical patient.”

But while bombast endeavours to soar beyond Sublimity itself, we have in affectation the very antipodes to true grandeur of style; a mean little-minded fault, with nothing noble about

it. What, then, may this affectation consist in? Clearly in that pedantic mode of thinking, which with its perverted ingenuity produces nothing but miserable conceits. Into this mode men slip in the effort at originality or high finish, or, above all, at elegance, instead of attaining which, they run into tawdry, meretricious ornament.\*

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\* The many curious instances of this fault which Cowley's writings exhibit, have deprived him of the lasting fame which his genius might otherwise have earned. Take for instance his ode on "The Resurrection," in which the loss of Virgil's *Æneid* is made a climax to the passing away of the whole visible universe:—

"Till all gentle notes be drown'd  
In the last trumpet's dreadful sound,  
That to the spheres themselves shall silence bring,  
Untune the universal string,  
Then all th' wide-extended sky,  
And all the harmonious worlds on high,  
And Virgil's sacred work shall die."

Dryden mars the resounding harmonies of his two sublime odes, the "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," and "Alexander's Feast," by concluding each with a poor antithetical conceit:—

"So, when the last and dreadful hour,  
This crumbling pageant shall devour,  
The trumpet shall be heard on high,

Kindred to this is a third species of fault, where the passions are concerned, which Theodorus used to call a would-be phrenzy. This consists in the display of emotion, out of season and without reason, where no emotion is wanted; or out of measure, where it ought to be moderate. For not unfrequently an orator rambles off, as if he had taken too much wine, from the emotions proper to his subject, into fancies of his own and passages of stock declamation. What wonder if the audience think his conduct absurd, seeing that there has been nothing to touch their feelings, or make them sympathize with his excitement. The working of the passions, however, I propose to discuss elsewhere.

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The dead shall live, the living die,  
*And music shall untune the sky."*

Again:—

"Let old Timotheus yield the prize,  
 Or both divide the crown,  
*He raised a mortal to the skies,  
 She drew an angel down."*

## IV.

*On Affectation.*

OF the second of the blemishes before-mentioned, namely, affectation or false point, Timæus affords copious illustration, though otherwise an able man, and a learned and ingenious writer, who sometimes rises into genuine eloquence. But whilst criticizing most sharply the faults of others, of his own he has little or no perception, so that from a love of perpetually originating novel conceits he falls repeatedly into ridiculous puerilities. I shall only quote an instance or two, the majority having been adduced already by Cæcilius. In praising Alexander the Great, he says, "The conquest of all Asia cost him fewer years, than the writing of his declamation for a war with Persia cost Isocrates." Certainly, the comparison of the man of war with the man of letters is marvellously fine! At that rate, Timæus, the Lacedæmonians must be far

less spirited than Isocrates, for it took them thirty years to conquer Messenia, whereas he finished his declamation in no more than ten.\*

How, again, does he moralize upon the defeat of the Athenians in Sicily? “For their impiety to Hermes,” he says, “and for having mutilated his statues, were they punished, and specially by means of one man, who in the male line was descended from the god they had insulted, namely, Hermocrates, the son of Hermon.” Is it not a wonder, my dear Terentianus, that he does not write of Dionysius the tyrant in like

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\* In our own literature, Bishop Jeremy Taylor deserves even more than the praise which Longinus bestows on Timæus; but his learning and ingenuity sometimes overflow into pedantry, bombast, and rhetorical refinements. Thus, in describing the end of the world, upon the majestic imagery of the Apocalypse, he bases a ludicrous calculation:—“If the clouds shall discharge thunderbolts and stones upon their heads, the heavens shall shoot no less balls than stars, which shall fall from thence; if hail, no bigger than little stones, falling from the clouds, destroy fields and sometimes kill the lesser sort of cattle, what shall pieces of stars do, falling from the firmament or upper region?”

manner, that "because of his impiety to Jupiter and Heracles he was deprived of his sovereignty by Dion and Heracleides."

Yet why speak of Timæus, when even those heroes, Xenophon and Plato, scholars from the school of Socrates though they be, sometimes forget themselves for the sake of such fripperies? For instance, the former in his "Polity of Sparta," has the following passage:—"As for speaking, they are more dumb than statues of stone, and you could no more get their eyes to rove than eyes of bronze, in short you would think them more bashful-modest even than the school-girls under the eyelids." It was more in the character of Amphicrates than of Xenophon to speak of the pupils in our eyes as bashful school-girls.\* What a notion, too, to suppose

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\* There are in Greek two words meaning "maiden." One of these also means the pupil of the eye. But in this passage the other word is forced into this double sense, in order to bring out an intolerably bad pun. Its insufferable badness is pretty well represented in the present version. But it is fair to add on Xenophon's behalf, that

that the pupils of the eyes are always bashful, when it is a common saying that the immodesty of some is indicated by the eyes more than anything, as Homer says of a shameless person,

“O thou, drunken with wine, that hast the eyes of a dog !”<sup>c</sup>

But poor as the conceit is, Timæus saw in it a chance of plunder, and could not leave it to its author. For he says of Agathocles, that “when his cousin had been married to another, two days after, on the very day of unveiling, he ran away with her. He must have had mistresses in his eyes instead of pupils to commit such a crime.” Plato, again, for all his sublime genius, speaks of “hanging up in the temples cypress-wood memories,”<sup>d</sup> meaning the tablets of the laws. And in another place, “As for walls,

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some critics maintain a slightly different reading, which gives an entirely different sense, namely, that “the Spartans seemed more bashful than even virgins in their nuptial chambers.” This results from an alteration of only two letters in the original.

<sup>c</sup> *Iliad*, i. 225.      <sup>d</sup> *The Laws*, Bk. v.



Megillus, I should be on the side of Sparta, to let them sleep prostrate on the ground and never to rouse them up.”\* We have another illustration in the passage of Herodotus where fair women are called “eye-sores.”† There may be some defence for this indeed, because the persons using the expression are barbarians, and in their cups. But putting it even into lips like theirs, it were better not for a frivolous conceit to disfigure a work to the end of time.

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\* Similar instances of perverted ingenuity may be found in Dryden’s “Annus Mirabilis,” where, for instance, he says that.

“Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies,  
And heaven, as if they wanted lights above,  
For tapers made two glaring comets rise ;”

and again where the Fire of London is put out by

“A broad extinguisher,”

while

“*A solemn silence damps the tuneful sky.*”

• *The Laws*, Bk. vi.    † *Herodotus*, v. 18.

## V.

*On misplaced efforts at Originality.*

ALL such blemishes of style are the result of a single cause, that pursuit of novelty in ideas, which has risen to a mania among authors of the present day. For it often happens that faults spring up out of the very sources of our excellence. Beauties of expression, all the characteristics of a lofty, and those also of a graceful, style, contribute to the perfection of a work. Yet these very elements of success may become the source and cause of failure. It is much the same with antithesis, hyperbole, and the use of plurals. These have their dangers, as I propose to shew hereafter. For the present we must seek for means and lay down rules by which to avoid, if possible, the errors to which eloquence itself is inherently liable.

## VI.

*That Taste is formed by rules and experience combined.*

To accomplish this, my friend, we are first of all to acquire a clear comprehension and discernment of what constitutes true sublimity. This is no easy acquisition; seeing that a just taste in literature is the tardy product of a large experience;\* although it may perhaps be possible

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\* For this reason, perhaps, Milton names Longinus almost at the very end of his scheme of Education. "When all these employments," he says, "are well conquered, then will the choice histories, heroic poems, and attic tragedies of stateliest and most regal argument, with all the famous political orations, offer themselves; which, if they were not only read, but some of them got by memory, and solemnly pronounced with right accent and grace, as might be taught, would endue them even with the spirit and vigour of Demosthenes or Cicero, Euripides, or Sophocles. And now lastly will be the time to read with them those organic arts, which enable men to discourse and write perspicuously, elegantly, and according

from the following remarks to acquire as much of this critical faculty as precepts can convey.

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to the fitted style of lofty, mean, and lowly. Logic, therefore, so much as is useful, is to be referred to this due place with all her well-couched heads and topics, until it be time to open her contracted palm into a graceful and ornate rhetoric, taught out of the rule of Plato, Aristotle, Phalereus, Cicero, Hermogenes, Longinus."

## VII.

*On the tests of true Sublimity.*

IN the ordinary affairs of life, my dear friend, nothing is essentially noble, the contempt of which is noble ; as wealth, honours, glory, sovereignty, and all things else that look grand on the surface : no sensible man can count them great blessings, when it is in itself no small blessing not to care for them. And undoubtedly men feel less admiration for the actual possessors than for those who, having them within their reach, out of magnanimity decline them. In the same way we ought to review the sublimities in poems and other compositions ; lest, with a similar display of grandeur to the eye, under a load of ill-assorted ornamentation, they be found when stripped of it, contemptibly unsubstantial,

adornments which it were nobler to contemn than to prize. For the human soul is naturally exalted by genuine sublimity, and anything grand and lofty fills it with pleasure and pride, as if itself were the author of what it heard. When therefore a man of sense and cultivation, upon hearing a passage repeatedly, finds that it neither disposes the soul to elevation of tone, nor yet leaves in the mind the material for thought ampler than the actual expression, but upon continuous inspection loses instead of gaining influence,—that cannot be true sublimity which lasts only so long as the sound continues. For real grandeur is a thing which draws out the powers of the mind largely, resistance to it being hard, or rather impossible, and the memory of it strong and ineffaceable. In short, those instances of the Sublime you are to consider, real and beautiful, which please continuously and universally. For when men of different pursuits and modes of life, different aims and ages and languages, agree in one com-

mon opinion upon a performance, the consentient voices of witnesses with so little in common make confidence in the object of admiration strong and indisputable.

## VIII.

*On the elements of Sublimity.*

THERE are five real and genuine fountains, as one might call them, of sublime expression, talent in speaking being pre-supposed as a common and absolutely essential foundation for these five principles.

First and chief is the attainment of grandeur in the conceptions, as I shewed in my treatise upon Xenophon. Next to this is emotion, of the vehement and uncontrollable kind. These two constituents of the Sublime are principally due to natural ability. Then art comes in for those which remain, namely, the appropriate moulding of figures (whether in the thought or in the expression), the use of dignified language (divisible again into choice of words and the figurative embellishment and rounding of sentences), and lastly, that cause in which all the preceding causes of sublimity meet and are



united, an admirable and majestic general structure or manner of composition.

Now let us consider what is comprehended under each of these divisions, only premising that Cæcilius left out one or more of the five, and undoubtedly omitted emotion from the constituents of the Sublime. But if he thought them both one, in all cases co-existing and being produced together, he is wholly mistaken. For some emotions, so far from being sublime, are of a lowly nature, as feelings of dolour and pain and fright; and again, sublimity is often displayed apart from emotion, as, besides ten thousand other instances, in the poet's bold invention about the Aloadæ,—

“ Ossa they longed to pile upon Olympus,  
And Pelion's waving pines on Ossa's heights,  
To climb the steep of heaven : ”—*ε*

with its still bolder sequel,—

“ Nor should have failed.”

And with orators, undoubtedly, eulogistic harangues, set speeches, and stately declamations may be thoroughly lofty and majestic, whilst almost entirely devoid of emotion. Hence the impassioned speaker is seldom qualified for panegyric, or the clever panegyrist for stirring the passions. But if, on the other hand, Cæcilius supposed that the passions or feelings never contribute at all to sublimity, and therefore thought proper not to mention them, he was under an utter delusion. For I should confidently affirm that there is no language grander than the timely expression of noble emotion, under, as it were, a kind of phrenzy and spirit of inspiration, filling, as it does, with a weird and magical sound the torrent of its utterances.

## IX.

*On Grandeur of Conception in general, and the Genius of Homer in particular.*

Now the first being the most effectual of all the causes,—the genius, I mean, for grand conceptions,—albeit a gift rather than an acquirement, demands nevertheless that the souls of men should be trained up to great ideas, and continually, as it were, impregnated with a noble inspiration. How shall this be? it may be asked. I have said elsewhere that such sublimity is an echo from greatness of mind. Hence sometimes the thought in its naked simplicity even without utterance is admirable from the innate magnanimity of it, as the silence of Ajax among the ghosts that appear to Ulysses is sublime, and grander than any speech could have been.<sup>h</sup> First, then, it is by all means necessary that the proper foundation should be laid to begin with,

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<sup>h</sup> *Odyssey*, xi. 563.

that the true orator must have a spirit the very reverse of a mean, ignoble one. For it is utterly impossible that a life-long course of petty, servile sentiments and practices should produce anything admirable or worthy of immortality. But, as reason demands, it is those who are weighty in thought that are noble in expression; and hence it occurs that when magnanimous things are said, it is the conspicuously magnanimous that say them. For instance, when Parmenio says of the Persian offers, "I should accept them, if I were Alexander;" from none but an Alexander could the rejoinder have come, "And so would I, if I were Parmenio."

So in the line,—

"Her stature reached the skies, her feet on earth,"\*<sup>1</sup>

\* Milton describes with equal grandeur the bulk of Satan, whose body, he says,—

"Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
Lay floating many a rood." P. L. i. 195.

And in Book iv. 988,—

"His stature reached the sky."

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, iv. 443.

the distance from earth to heaven marks also the extent of Homer's sublime genius, and one might take what he gives as the measure of strife as well for a measure of Homer himself.\*

Hesiod, if he be the author of "The Shield," falls far below this when he draws a picture of Sorrow "snivelling,"† for there the image is not awful but disgusting.†

\* In a similar strain Thomson ascribes to Milton—

"A genius universal as his theme;  
Astonishing as chaos, as the bloom  
Of blowing Eden fair, as heaven sublime."

† The same criticism will apply to Spenser's account of Errour, in the first Canto of the *Faërie Queen* :—

"Therewith she spewd out of her filthie maw  
A floud of poyson horrible and blacke,  
Full of great lumps of flesh, and gobbets raw,  
Which stunck so vildly, that it forst him slacke  
His grasping hold, and from her turn him backe :  
Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,  
With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke,  
And creeping sought way in the weedy gras :  
Her filthie parbreake all the place defiled has."

Such details are more fitted to disgust us with the portrait, than with the thing portrayed.

‡ *Hesiod, The Shield of Hercules*, 267.

On the other hand, with what majesty does Homer invest his gods :—

“ Far as the watcher on his lofty crag  
O’er dark-blue sea can pierce the distant haze,  
So far the snorting coursers of the gods  
Leap at a single bound.”<sup>k</sup>

The scale in which he measures their stride is that of the universe. What a grand hyperbole, at which one might well exclaim that, if the horses of the gods took a second leap, the universe itself would fail them.

His imagery, again, in “The Battle of the Gods,” is magnificent to a degree.

“ Heaven and Olympus rang with thunder loud.”  
“ Hell’s monarch, startled in his dark abyss,  
Leaped from his throne and shouted ; much he feared  
Poseidon should uproot the solid earth,  
And shew to mortal and immortal eyes  
The foul and ghastly homes that scare the gods  
themselves.”<sup>l</sup>

Do you see in this picture, my friend, how, with

<sup>k</sup> *Homer, Iliad, v. 770.*

<sup>l</sup> *Iliad, xx. 61.*

earth's foundations on the point of breaking up, and Tartarus itself to be laid bare in the general crash and confusion of the world, all things together, heaven and hell, things mortal and immortal, take their part in the strife and danger of the conflict that is waging? The description is certainly an awful one, but unless taken by way of allegory utterly irreverent and unobservant of propriety. For in ascribing to gods wounds, divisions, revenges, tears, bonds, afflictions of every description, Homer seems to me, as far as he could, to have turned the men of the Trojan era into gods, and the gods into men. Now to us mortals in our wretchedness there is an appointed harbour of refuge from our calamities, even death; but to the gods, as Homer painted them, there was not so much an immortality of nature as an eternity of misery. Far better than this description in the *Battle of the Gods* are those passages in which he represents the divine nature as something undefiled and really great and pure, as for

instance in the often-quoted passage about Poseidon :—

“ The forest trembled, and the city of Troy,  
The crested mountains, and the Achæan fleets,  
As o’er the waves divine Poseidon rode.  
From all their caverns monsters of the deep  
With circling gambols owned their sovereign lord.  
The sea made way for gladness. On the coursers  
flew.”<sup>m</sup>

Thus also the lawgiver of the Jews, no ordinary man, having comprehended the power of the divinity according to the just conception thereof, unfolded it correspondingly, in what he wrote in the very introduction to his laws :—  
“ God said,” saith he : what ? “ ‘ Let there be light,’ and there was light.” “ ‘ Let the dry land appear,’ and it was so.”<sup>n</sup>

Passing from divine to human portraiture, perhaps without seeming tedious I may give you one more passage from Homer, to shew

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<sup>m</sup> For this quotation, though in appearance one, see *Iliad*, *xiii.* 18; *xx.* 60; and *xiii.* 27.

<sup>n</sup> *Genesis* *ch. i.* verses 3 and 9.



how characteristic it is with him in describing heroic greatness to attain heroic grandeur. He represents thick fog on a sudden and impracticable night coming over the battle of the Greeks, when Ajax in his helplessness exclaims,—

“O Father Zeus, Achaia’s sons set free  
From darkness, and restore the clear serene ;  
Then in the daylight slay me if thou wilt.”\*o

Here in living force is the passion of an Ajax ; for he does not pray to live (such a request would be beneath the hero) ; but since in incapacitating darkness he could not turn his courage to any noble act, chafing at his forced inaction, he begs for light upon the instant, as though he could not choose but meet an end worthy of his

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\* Burke adduces this passage to illustrate his position, that darkness is an element of terror, and therefore, according to his theory, of the Sublime. In utter darkness, he says, “the boldest are staggered, and he, who would pray for nothing else towards his defence, is forced to pray for light.” But Burke’s untenable theory seems to have led him into a misconception of what Homer here intended.

o *Iliad*, xvii. 645.

valour, though Zeus himself should be his antagonist. Well here the spirit of Homer riots in the very spirit of the conflict, and his passion is like that of one

“ Who foams with rage and phrenzy, e'en as when  
Spear-wielding Ares rages, or fierce flame  
Kindles its fury on the pine-clad heights.”<sup>p</sup>

Nevertheless in the *Odyssey* he shews (what also on many accounts deserves our attention) that a great genius at its ebb is apt with advancing years to become garrulous. For that he wrote this work after the other is clear for many reasons; but especially from his interspersing it with remnants of the calamities in the *Iliad*, a kind of episodes of the Trojan war, and from his paying off in this poem the lamentations and piteous wailings, elsewhere long before predestined, so to speak, for his heroes. For the *Odyssey* is simply a sequel to the *Iliad* :—

“ Here warrior Ajax lies, Achilles here,

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<sup>p</sup> *Iliad*, xv. 605.

And here Patroclus, sage as are the gods,  
And here my own dear offspring."<sup>4</sup>

From the same cause, I imagine, his conception of the Iliad, written in the vigour of his genius, filled that work with stirring action, and gave it throughout a dramatic character; while most of the Odyssey is narrative, the very thing that suits old age. Hence in the Odyssey we might compare Homer to the sun setting, when its size remains apart from its strength. For here, no longer does he keep up the strain to match those songs of Troy; no longer that sublimity which never varies, never declines, no longer in equal degree that outpouring of the thronging passions, no longer that versatility strong in eloquence, and adorned with a multitude of natural images. But as when the ocean retires into itself, abandoning the fulness of its boundaries, we can see how high it rose before the ebbing; so it is with Homer's genius in those

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<sup>4</sup> *Odyssey*, iii. 109.

fabulous and incredible wanderings of the Odyssey: not that, in all this, I have forgotten its tempests, the scenes with the Cyclops, and other magnificent passages; I am describing old age—but it is the old age of Homer. Still, all through, we have fable-telling, much more than real life enacted. And the object of this digression was, as I said, to shew how very easily great genius, when its zenith is passed, swerves from time to time into absurdities, such as the story of the sack of winds,<sup>r</sup> and of the men whom Circe fed like swine,<sup>s</sup> whom Zoilus called “whining sucking-pigs,” and of Zeus being brought up in the dove-cote like a young dove, and of Ulysses on the wreck going ten days without food,<sup>\*t</sup> and the incredible nar-

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\* Nevertheless, in the newspapers for September, 1866, may be found the narrative of Captain Casey, who, by his own account, spent twenty-eight days upon a wreck without food. The evidence was accredited by the medical men who saw his emaciated frame, and accepted as trustworthy by a London magistrate.

<sup>r</sup> *Od.* x. 19.      <sup>s</sup> *Od.* x. 243.      <sup>t</sup> *Od.* xii. 447.

rative of the slaughter of the suitors."<sup>u</sup> For what else can we really call these but the dreams of Zeus?

But for a second reason the *Odyssey* deserves examination, that you may know how the decline of passion in great writers, whether of prose or poetry, calms down into a description of manners. For such, doubtless, is the picture of the household of Ulysses, which Homer sketches to the life, with all its characteristics, like the representation of manners and customs in a comedy.

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<sup>u</sup> *Od. xxii. 265.*

## X.

*On the choice of Materials, and how to combine them.*

WE are now to enquire whether we have any further means that can make our words sublime. And since every subject has a natural and fundamental connexion with certain lines of thought, we should necessarily find a source of sublimity in the uniform selection of the most appropriate among our materials, and in working them up by mutual adaptation and arrangement into a united whole, charming the hearer as well by the selection of the materials as by the ordering of what is selected: as Sappho, for instance, invariably fetches out of natural effects and living reality, the incidents proper to the jealousies and extravagances of love; but there above all shews her genius, where it is exerted

both to select and to bring into concert those  
of the highest and the noblest kind:—

“Peer of immortals he appears to *my* mind,  
Who before *thy* face sitting is enchanted  
With the soft voice-tones, and the merry peals of  
Loveliest laughter.

How they make *my* heart flutter in my bosom,  
Timidly cowering: when I look upon thee,  
Voice and all living faculty of language  
Sinks in confusion.

All through my veins a subtle flame of passion  
Glides in its swift course, and a pall of darkness  
Falls on mine eye-sight, while reverberating  
Murmurs assail me.

Down the chill sweat pours, tremor seizes on me  
Breathless and blanching to a hue more pallid  
Than the pale-green grass, and the gates of death seem  
Closing upon me.

Yet we must dare all, since unto the poor man,” &c.\*

\* Catullus addressed to Lesbia a Latin version of this celebrated ode. His poem is elegantly rendered by Mr. Theodore Martin as follows:—

“Peer for the gods he seems to me,  
And mightier, if that may be,  
Who sitting face to face with thee,  
Can there serenely gaze,

Does she not admirably gather up into her subject the soul, the body, the powers of hearing, the tongue, the sight of the eyes, the com-

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Can hear thee sweetly speak the while,  
 Can see thee, Lesbia, sweetly smile,  
 Joys that from me my senses wile,  
 And leave me in a maze.

For, ever, when thy face I view,  
 My voice is to its task untrue,  
 My tongue is paralysed, and through  
 Each limb a subtle flame  
 Runs swiftly, murmurs dim arise  
 Within my ears, across my eyes  
 A sudden darkness spreads, and sighs  
 And tremors shake my frame."

The French version by Boileau and the English by Ambrose Phillips are sufficiently well-known, and easily accessible in the 229th number of the *Spectator*, where Addison compares this fragment of Sappho to the famous Torso at Rome. A young and brilliant poet of our own day has written a paraphrase of this ode with,—

"Stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine  
 That Love was born of burns and foams like wine;"  
 and with stinging lips, moreover, has defended in prose the fierce fervour of his poetry. Nevertheless, the admirers of Mr. Swinburne's genius may be allowed to deplore the exaggerations both of feeling and expression in which he so freely and so impetuously indulges.



plexion,—in short, every part of the person, like so many separate beings, all dying of love; while, by a combination of opposites, at one and the same moment she is chilled, inflamed, raving, reasoning, cowering with terror, almost dead; that she may seem affected, not by one single passion, but by a concourse of them all. Such feelings, indeed, in every variety do lovers display; but it is the adoption, as I said, of the choicest among them, and the weaving them together, that produced the consummate beauty of this poem; exactly, I think, as Homer in his description of storms, selects the wildest of the attendant circumstances. For the author of the *Arimaspeia* may be satisfied that he is awe-inspiring in the lines:—

“ With wonder great this also filled my soul;  
 Some men there be that far from any shore  
 Tenant the watery main. Woe worth the while!  
 To gaze for ever at the cold blank stars  
 And hold their lives at mercy of the deep!  
 In sooth, not seldom with upheaving hearts  
 They raise their hands in agony of prayer.”

But this account I think every one must see is more florid than awful. We turn then to Homer, and quote one passage out of many :—

“ He fell upon them as on vessel swift  
The giant storm-wave falls, in seething foam  
Shrouding the bark ; the tempest roaring loud  
Fills all her straining canvas, and the crew  
Tremble for fear, so nigh-near unto death.”<sup>v</sup>

This latter thought Aratus attempted to borrow :—

“ A thin small plank between them and the grave ;”<sup>w</sup>  
only he made it petty and finical instead of terrible; and besides limited the peril, with his

“ Plank between them and the grave :”

at any rate it is between them. But the great poet does not for a moment limit the danger, but pictures the men as at every moment and over and over again all but perishing with each successive billow. And assuredly by forcing together contrary to nature, and bringing into compul-

<sup>v</sup> *Iliad*, xv. 624.      <sup>w</sup> *Phænomena*, v. 300.

sory union those parts of speech which are not proper for combination, in his “nigh-near unto death,” he put a stress upon the expression in correspondence with the stress of the situation, the extraordinary nature of which he aptly represented by a combination so uncommon, and almost stamped upon his mode of speech the character of the peril itself, “so nigh-near unto death:”\* as, in like manner, Archilochus, in the “Shipwreck,” and Demosthenes about the arrival of the news, in the passage beginning, “For it was evening.”<sup>x</sup> By a process of

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\* It may be fairly said that this piece of criticism is more extraordinary as coming from Longinus, than even the grandeur of Homer’s *Tempest*. The remark in the original turns upon the composition of a verb with two prepositions, which is far less remarkable in the Greek language than such an expression as “nigh-near” would be in English. Besides, as Weiske observes, the objection taken to the verse of Aratus, that the peril is not carried to the last extremity, will be equally applicable here, and the whole observation consequently comes “nigh-near” unto absurdity.

<sup>x</sup> *Speech on the Crown*, p. 284. ed. Reiske.

purgation, as one might say, they admitted into their compositions nothing but the choicest excellences, free from all frivolous, undignified, or bombastic interruptions. For these spoil the whole, just as fragments of rubbish or gaping interstices deface the materials, which in skilful architecture and with solid masonry produce a fine and noble effect.

## XI.

*On Amplification.*

To be classed with those before-mentioned, there is another excellence, called amplification. It is found where the cause or subject admits periods with numerous coördinate subdivisions, wherein circumstances of sublimity are introduced by the machinery of genius, in a close and uninterrupted gradation. It may be used for rhetorical exposition, for the emphasis of oratory, for the forcible statement of facts or arguments, for the array of actions or passions: in fact, the species of amplification are innumerable; only the orator must remember that no one of these can stand complete by itself without sublimity, except indeed where the object is to excite commiseration, or to depreciate. Strip the element of sublimity

from any other species of amplification whatsoever, and you will, as it were, take the soul out of the body. For their efficiency is at once relaxed and drained away, without the strength of sublimity to support them. In what way, however, the present precepts differ from the remarks preceding them (where we spoke of mustering and enrolling into one all the choicest materials), and how, in general, the forms of sublimity differ from those of amplification, for the more clearness must be briefly defined.

## XII.

*On the definition of Amplification. The style of  
Demosthenes compared with Cicero's.*

WITH the definition in the text-books, I, for my part, am not satisfied. Amplification, say they, is language adding magnitude to the subject. This definition is equally applicable to sublimity, pathos, and rhetorical figures, since these also add magnitude of one sort or another to the language. But these appear to me to differ from one another, inasmuch as sublimity consists in elevation, but amplification in fulness of style. For which reason, the former is often presented even in a single thought, while the latter can only coëxist with a certain abundance and superfluity. So that, to sketch it in

outline, amplification is a filling-in from all the divisions and sub-divisions of materials pertaining to the subject, by the elaboration strengthening the general structure; differing herein from the argumentation, inasmuch as the latter demonstrates the problem, the former, in the abundant fulness of exposition, ocean-like is poured forth in every direction, in wide-spread volume.\* Hence it follows, I think, not without reason, that in the orator, as aiming to excite the feelings, the flame burns vigorously and with a lively blaze, while the other, whose style is sustained in majestic stateliness, though not without animation, has less impetuosity. It is just in this way, my dear friend (if as a Greek I may be permitted to offer the criticism),

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\* A lacuna in the M.S. towards the end of this sentence makes the connexion doubtful, and the translation conjectural. In what follows, some understand a comparison between the orator and the philosopher in the abstract; others, between Demosthenes and Plato in particular.



that I think the eloquence of Cicero differs from the eloquence of Demosthenes. For the latter is grandly abrupt, the former all fluency. The Greek orator, burning and shivering everything, as he seems to do, with his violence, rapidity, strength, and vehemence, might be compared to a thunderbolt or lightning flash. But Cicero, to my mind, is like a far-spreading conflagration, finding fuel in every direction, and rolling onwards, with its flames as persevering as they are extensive, diverging in all ways, and kindling up afresh time after time. Submitting this to your better-qualified judgment, I may add, that when awe and intense effect are needed, in the midst of vehement passions, and in general where the hearer must be thunder-struck, the Demosthenic sublimity and energy find their proper scope. But, to soothe or attract with the flow of language, use the fluent and diffusive style. This is the proper style for ordinary themes, and generally for perorations, for digressions, for all kinds of exposition and declamation,

for narratives\* and scientific disquisitions, and not a few other kinds of discourse.

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\* In a long-continued narrative no style but this is bearable to the reader. Hence it is that Gibbon, our greatest historian, notwithstanding the imposing unity of his vast conception, in the History of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," charms by his style and manner far more in isolated chapters than in a general perusal of his work. For in the latter we grow wearied with the constant iteration of epigram and antithesis, the measured periods, the unvarying stateliness,—the want, in short, of an easy flow, and diffusiveness of style.

## XIII.

*On the style of Plato, and the use to be made of  
Classic Antiquity.*

To resume, then: Plato's style is the diffusive, a stream without uproar, but none the less with a majesty of its own, as I need scarcely say to one who has read the following passage of "The Republic." "They, then, that know not the ways of wisdom and virtue, but have their conversation in revelries and the like continually, take, it seems, the downward course, and so are in the maze of error throughout life. Upward towards the truth they never yet directed either glance or movement, never yet enjoyed the taste of pure constant pleasure; but, like beasts of the field, with eyes ever looking down and heads bowed to earth and over their tables, they pamper their carnal appetites, and only to

indulge these without stint, kick and butt their fellows with horns and hoofs of iron even to the death, and are never satisfied.”\*

Plato shews us by his own example, that there is another road to sublimity besides those already mentioned. What road is this? It lies in the imitation, and at the same time emulation, of the great writers and poets of old times. To this aim, therefore, my friend, let us staunchly devote ourselves. For many are inspired by

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\* Those who would find in English literature a style, like Plato's, commended by its winning simplicity, yet with a majesty of its own, and proving that there is more than one road to the Sublime, need search no farther than “The Pilgrim's Progress.” The account, for example, of “Mr. Fearing's troublesome pilgrimage,” is a masterpiece of style and expression, in that, without rounding of periods or epithets of ornament, or a single word above the common level, it excites in the highest degree, and calls forth by turns, and again and again, feelings of pity, astonishment, admiration, love, hope, alarm, and joyful triumph. We breathe again, as we ask with Honest, “Then it seems he was well at last?” and Greatheart replies, “Yes, yes, I never had any doubt about him.”

† *Plato, Republic, Bk. x. p. 586.*

genius not their own; like the Pythian priestess, who, if report speaks true, no sooner comes nigh the tripod, at a spot where the gaping earth exhales (we are told) a magic vapour, than she becomes impregnated with the power of the divinity, and by faculty of inspiration promulges oracles. So, from the mighty genius of the ancients, there flow into the souls of their votaries, as if from sacred caverns, certain effluences of inspiration, whereby men without any excess in themselves of the divine madness are rapt by the majesty of others into a kindred ecstasy. Herodotus was a zealous disciple of Homer; but not Herodotus alone. Stesichorus had been so before him, and Archilochus. But Plato went beyond them all, drawing to himself a myriad rills from Homer's river.\*

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\* So Spenser draws from the father of English poetry,—  
 “Dan Chaucer, well of English undefyled,

On fame's eternall bead-roll worthie to be fyled.”

So Milton from the famous wits of every age and country gathers the golden ore, which appears refined and moulded in the splendour of his workmanship.

(Illustrations of this it is scarcely necessary for us to give, since a specific selection was written out by Ammonius and his pupils.)

This is no plagiarism, but like designing after fine examples in painting,\* or sculpture, or architecture. Besides, I cannot think that the quaint old language would have bloomed in the tenets of philosophy, or that Plato would so often have followed Homer's lead into poetical subjects and modes of expression, had he not been striving with him heart and soul for pre-eminence, as a new champion against one already famous; perhaps with too evident a

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It should be remembered that our own language and literature alike are full of a sweet infusion from the spirit of Greek and Roman antiquity. With the decay of classical studies, all that part of our national speech which has sprung from them must gradually lose its significance, and all the glorious works which at present adorn our tongue, when the thousand threads of allusion and association have been sundered, must become in succession unmeaning, despised, and forgotten.

\* The reading here is somewhat uncertain.

contention, and as it were with the weapons of war, but yet not fruitlessly; for, as Hesiod says,

“ Good is this strife for mortals,”<sup>2</sup>

and indeed, the garland of renown is as well worth the winning as the contest for it is glorious, wherein even to fall short of that elder time is no disgrace.

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<sup>2</sup> *Hesiod, Works and Days, v. 24.*

## XIV.

*On imagining a tribunal of the great Old Masters,  
and the verdict of Future Ages.*

It would be well then for us also, whenever the object of our labours demands loftiness of expression and thought, to represent to ourselves how, upon the like occasion, Homer would have spoken; how Plato or Demosthenes would have given it dignity; or, in historical narrative, Thucydides. For their persons presenting themselves to our emulation, and shining as it were before our eyes, will somehow raise up the soul to the height of its ideal; and still more, if I were further to make a mental picture of Homer or Demosthenes sitting listening to my own composition, and to think what would have been their feeling or judgment upon it. For doubtless the ordeal is no light one, to propose



for one's own productions such a tribunal and audience ; and before those heroes of the past, in their twofold capacity of judges and witnesses, to undergo, in fancy, the scrutiny of one's writings. But there is an incentive beyond these in the further enquiry, "What sort of attention should I win from future ages by such a work?" But if, upon this enquiry, a man were afraid that he could never utter what would survive his own life and time, it follows that the conceptions of his mind must be a kind of abortive progeny, defective and blind, being simply devoid of that perfection which qualifies for the perpetuity of posthumous fame.

## XV.

*On Imagination, in Poetry and Oratory respectively.*

IN the colours of Imagination also (to take a name which some give to the representations of fancy) we may find, my young friend, no mean supplies for weight and grandeur of style, and for the struggle to attain them. Every thought, I know, that can be clothed in words, howsoever presenting itself, comes under the common name of Imagination; but in a special sense that word has come to apply to cases where, under strong agitation and feeling, you seem to see the things you speak of, and bring them before the very eyes of the audience.

You must be well aware that the function of imagination in the orator is different from what it is with poets: its aim in poetry being vividness, but in oratory to startle, though in both

alike it seeks to call forth powerful emotion.  
For example, in Euripides:—

“ O mother, mother, break the spell !  
Hear, I beseech thee, hear and spare !  
Call off this maiden-rout of hell  
With gory eyes and snaky hair ;  
They spring, they spring upon me with their ghastly  
glare.”\*<sup>a</sup>

and,—

“ Oh, she will slay me ; whither shall I flee ? ”

Here the poet himself had a vision of furies, but this imaginary picture he forced his audience also to see, almost with their bodily eyes. Indeed Euripides is most industrious in working up these two emotions,—phrenzy and love ; and more effective, I am inclined to think, in these than in any others ; not but that he tries his hand with some boldness at the other imaginative subjects ; at any rate, far as he was from

\* Compare with this the rising of Banquo's Ghost in the Third Act of Macbeth, and the apparition of the Kings in the Fourth Act.

<sup>a</sup> *Euripides, Orestes*, 255.

grandeur of genius, he often forced his nature to a statelier mood, and on all occasions where his aim is lofty, like Homer's lion,—

“ He lashes with his tail his flanks and loins,  
And kindles all his ardour for the fight.”<sup>b</sup>      †

To wit, the Sun, when entrusting the reins to Phaëthon, exclaims,—

“ Guide thou thy coursers far from Libya's sky.  
That all unmoistened clime will let thy car  
Drop through the thin air downwards.”      †

Then subsequently,—

“ ‘ Now launch them, steering for the Pleiads seven.’  
Then he, thus far attentive, grasped the reins,  
And smiting on their flanks the wingèd team,  
Set them in motion. O'er the deep-riven clouds  
They wing their way. His sire, the while, behind,  
Mounted on Sirius rode, warning his child,  
‘ Drive hither: this way, that way, turn the car.’ ”<sup>c</sup>

Would you not say that the spirit of the author mounts the chariot along with the charioteer, runs the peril with him, and has been furnished

<sup>b</sup> *Iliad*, xx. 170.

<sup>c</sup> *These passages probably belong to a play called “Phaethon,” no longer extant.*

with wings like the horses? For had not the soaring flight of his spirit been equal to those ethereal doings, such things could never have been depicted by his imagination.\* The like may be said of his Cassandra,<sup>d</sup> in the passage beginning—

“Ye courser-loving Trojans.”

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\* Compare the inimitable passage in *King Lear*, Act 4, Scene 6, in which Edgar, by description of a precipice, persuades the blind Gloucester that he is standing upon the edge of one:—

“Come on, sir; here’s the place:—Stand still.—How fearful

And dizzy ’tis, to cast one’s eyes so low!

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air,

Shew scarce so gross as beetles: Halfway down

Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!

Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:

The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,

Appear like mice; and yon tall anchoring bark,

Diminish’d to her cock; her cock a buoy

Almost too small for sight: The murmuring surge,

That on the unnumber’d idle pebbles chafes,

Cannot be heard so high:—I’ll look no more,

Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight

Topple down headlong.”

<sup>d</sup> *A lost play.*

Æschylus aspires to imagery far above the ordinary level; for example, in his "Seven against Thebes," he tells us that--

"Champions seven, impetuous chiefs of war,  
O'er a black shield the sacrificial bull  
Slew, and, with hands ensanguined in the gore,  
Swore a fell oath by Ares and Enyo,  
And by blood-loving Terror,"

plighting each his own death without ruth to his fellows.

Sometimes, however, he introduces his conceits in the rough, and, so to speak, in the undressed state of the raw material; but notwithstanding, Euripides emulously forces himself to follow him even in those rugged paths. And in Æschylus, indeed, one is shocked by the improbability, when, on the manifestation of Dionysus, the palace of Lycurgus becomes possessed,—

"The walls, the roof, with Bacchic phrenzy own  
The inspiring God."<sup>t</sup>

• *Line 42.*

<sup>t</sup> *The play from which this is cited is no longer extant.*

But Euripides, giving a different expression to the same idea, softened its harshness:—

“While all the mountain revelled with the God.”\*‡

The imagery of Sophocles also is extremely vivid, in the case of the dying Œdipus, marching to his grave amidst a portentous thunder-storm, and where the ghost of Achilles shews itself over his tomb to the Greeks as they set sail from Troy; a scene portrayed, I think, in a more lively manner by Simonides than by any one

\* How easily, even without intention, grand and majestic imagery may be exaggerated into what is ludicrous, Cowley’s “Ode on the Resurrection,” before-quoted, furnishes a striking example. He thus describes the forlorn condition of the wicked, and the tumult of the world, under the last judgments:—

“Unhappy most, like tortured men,  
Their joints new set, to be new racked again.  
To mountains they for shelter pray,  
The mountains shake, and run about no less confused  
than they.”

Contrast with this the language of St. John in “The Revelation,” ch. vi. 14—16.

‡ Euripides, *The Bacchantes*, 726.

else. But it is out of the question to cite every instance.

It should, however, be borne in mind that the poetical fancy admits of exaggeration; tending, as I said, to the fabulous, and altogether transcending credibility: while excellence in oratorical imagination is confined to the sphere of the real and practicable. The digressions are strange and unnatural when the imagery employed in an oration is poetical and fabulous, and exceeds all limits of possibility; as in truth the clever orators among us now-a-days have visions of furies, like the tragedians, failing with all their five wits to comprehend the simple fact that when Orestes cries—

“Unhand me, demon, loose thy vengeful grip  
That seeks to hurl me down the abyss of hell,”<sup>h</sup>

he imagines all this, because he is mad.

The question then arises, What *is* the scope of the oratorical imagination? It enhances, no

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<sup>h</sup> *Euripides, Orestes, 264.*



doubt, in many ways, the warmth and animation of language; but, above all, artfully blend it with the proofs in a cause, and it carries more than persuasion, it even enslaves the judgment of the hearer. "By heaven," says Demosthenes,<sup>i</sup> "if at this very moment an outcry were heard outside the courts, and then one told us, 'The prison has been opened, the prisoners are escaping,' every man old or young, however generally indifferent, would rush to give all the assistance in his power. Then suppose one came forward and declared, 'This is the man that let them loose,' at once, without opportunity for defence, would his life be forfeited."\*

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\* The speech by Lord (then Mr.) Brougham, on "The Orders in Council," June, 1812, affords a lively instance of the oratorical imagination. He is attacking the folly which slighted an enormous commerce with America, when a doubtful opening for the thirtieth part of such a trade with the continent of Europe would have been hailed with greedy satisfaction. "Into what transports of delight would the Vice-President be flung! I verily

<sup>i</sup> *Speech against Timocrates*, p. 764, ed. Reiske.

In like fashion, when impeached for his manumission of the slaves, after the defeat in Bœotia, Hypereides answered, "It was not I that framed this measure, but the battle of Chæronea." For, by the ingenious combination of imagery with

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believe he would make but one step from his mansion to his office—all Downing Street, and all Duke's Place would be in an uproar of joy. Bless me, what a scene of activity and business should we see! what Cabinets—what Boards!—what amazing Conferences of Lords of Trade!—what a driving together of Ministers!—what a rustling of small Clerks?—what a mighty rushing of Brokers!—Circulars to the manufacturing towns!—harangues upon 'Change, performed by eminent naval characters—triumphal processions of dollars and volunteers in St. James's Square! Hourly deputations from the merchants—courteous and pleasing answers from the Board—a speedy importation into Whitehall, to a large amount, of worthy knights representing the City—a quick return cargo of licences and hints for cargoes—the whole craft and mystery of that licence trade revived, with its appropriate perjuries and frauds—new life given to the drooping firms of dealers in forgery, whom I formerly exposed to you—answered by corresponding activity in the Board of Trade and its Clerks—slips of the pen worth fifteen thousand pounds—judicious mistakes—well-considered oversights—elaborate inadvertencies."

argument, the orator has transcended the bounds of ordinary persuasion: and, natural as it is that the more powerful appeal should ever win our attention, the striking representations of fancy divert us from the logical proof, and so the real question at issue is lost in the glitter that surrounds it. Nor is there anything extraordinary in this result, for when two things are combined, the more forcible invariably attracts to itself the other's power.

Here we may close our observations on sublimity in ideas, as resulting from noble-mindedness, the following of great models, or the exercise of imagination.

## XVI.

*On Figures of Rhetoric. The famous rhetorical oath in Demosthenes.*

NEXT in order comes the disquisition on figures of rhetoric, no mean contribution to majesty of style, if, as I said, they be judiciously handled. To examine all exactly, would be in this place a laborious, not to say an interminable process; but nevertheless, a few of those which specially conduce to eloquence, if only to establish our proposition, shall be discussed in full. Demosthenes<sup>1</sup> is defending his policy (in reference to the battle of Chæronea); what was the obvious method of expression? “Ye were not wrong,” he might have said, “O ye that espoused the contest for the freedom of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Speech on the Crown*, p. 297. ed. Reiske.

Greeks; you have, I say, in your own annals, examples to prove it; unless they too were wrong that fought at Marathon, that fought at Salamis, that fought at Platæa." Instead of which, like one divinely rapt in a sudden burst of inspiration, he thundered forth his oath by Greece's noblest:—"By the patriots of yore, the champions of Marathon, ye were not, ye were not wrong." The simple contrivance of this rhetorical oath is the apotheosis of their forefathers; the patriot dead are to be sworn by like gods: his very judges are animated with the spirit of those that bled at Marathon; for simple truth is substituted a marvellous sublimity and passion, and the attestation of an oath as original as it is imposing; while the language so insinuates an anodyne and antidote into the minds of his hearers, that under the flattering unction they allow themselves to compare the day of Chæronea to the triumphant glories of Marathon and Salamis. All this the figure involved, irresistibly to carry the audience along with the

orator. It is true they say the germ of the oath has been found in a passage of Eupolis:—

“Of all the crew that vexeth me  
Never a one shall go scot free.  
By my fight at Marathon, I swear  
Mine arm its vengeance shall not spare.”

But it is not any casual oath that is grand; everything depends on the specialities of place and manner, the moment, the purpose. Now in Eupolis there is no more than an oath, and that addressed to the Athenians while still in prosperity and in no need of encouragement. Besides, the poet's oath gave no apotheosis to the actual warriors, to beget in the hearers an adequate estimate of their noble conduct, but strayed away from the personal champions to the impersonal notion of the battle. But in Demosthenes the oath has been utilized in regard to the Athenians in defeat, to the end that Chæronea might no longer look like a disaster in their eyes. So that a single phrase becomes, I repeat, disproof of wrong, example of right, confirmation by oath, eulogy of the

past, exhortation for the future. And since the objection might be made, "Your administration led to the defeat you speak of, and do you swear by victories?"—on this account the orator observes a well-ordered sequence, and marshals his every word with caution, shewing that even in the fervours of inspiration there should be sobriety. "Our forefathers," he cries, "the soldiers of Marathon, and the mariners of Salamis and of Artemisium, and the ranks of Platæa," nowhere applying to them the title of "victors," but throughout concealing the name of the issue, since it was successful, and very little like the affair at Chæronea. For the same reason he makes haste and leads away the attention of the hearer, adding, "Upon the whole of these men, Æschines, the state bestowed a public funeral, not upon those only that were successful."\*

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\* We may compare with this the peroration of Burke's first speech at the trial of Warren Hastings, in which he

dexterously assumes that, far from being simply a manager of the impeachment for the House of Commons, he has not only the sympathy to encourage, but the very commands of his country and the world at large, to compel him, to pursue 'the common enemy and oppressor of all.'

"I impeach him," he says, "in the name of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, whose parliamentary trust he has betrayed. I impeach him in the name of all the Commons of Great Britain, whose national character he has dishonoured. I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights, and liberties he has subverted, whose properties he has destroyed, whose country he has laid waste and desolate. I impeach him in the name and by virtue of those eternal laws of justice which he has violated. I impeach him in the name of human nature itself, which he has cruelly outraged, injured, and oppressed, in both sexes, in every age, rank, situation, and condition of life."



## XVII.

*The Province of Art—to make Genius conspicuous :  
of Genius—to keep Art unsuspected.*

AT this part of the subject, my dear friend, I ought not to omit one of my speculations, which shall be briefly treated; how, namely, it naturally comes to pass that the figures of rhetoric help sublimity, and are in turn surprisingly helped by it. The occasions and the manner I will explain. The subtilty brought into play by rhetorical figures is peculiarly matter of suspicion; it conveys a latent notion of some snare or ruse or sophistry; a thing to be remembered when the speech is addressed to an irresponsible judge, and especially to despots, kings, supreme governors; for such an one takes offence at once, if he have his intellect played upon like a child's by an artist in words with tricks of rhetoric; and, considering the

sophistry a slight upon his own understanding, sometimes becomes completely furious, or, even if he controls his temper, becomes wholly disinclined to be persuaded by the pleading. So that, in fact, a figure of rhetoric then seems to be best, when the circumstance is quite kept out of sight that it is a figure of rhetoric. Accordingly, sublimity and passion are a wonderful help and support for counter-acting the secret feeling about the use of figures, and under cover of impassioned and majestic circumstances the art of our subtilty is lost to further view and escapes from all suspicion. We have a sufficient demonstration of this in the before-mentioned oath—"by the heroes of Marathon." For by what did the orator on that occasion conceal the figure? Clearly by the very brilliance of it. For one may say, that just as the lesser luminaries are quenched by the sun when surrounded by his beams, so the splendour of eloquence, when shed around the artifices of rhetoric,

throws them into the shade. And there is a result not unlike this in drawing. For though the light and the shade are set side by side on the same surface, nevertheless the light advances to meet the eye, and appears not merely in relief, but even far nearer. And so too in language, what is impassioned and what is sublime, lying nearer to our souls through a natural affinity and through their brightness, ever shine in front of the rhetorical figures, relegating to the shade and as it were hiding away their artificial construction.

## XVIII.

*On the Rhetorical Question, and Imaginary Colloquies.*

IN the next place, how are we to treat all the machinery of feigned conversations and questionings? Does it not by its very nature quicken the language into far more life and energy? For example,<sup>k</sup> “What! will ye run about asking one another, Is there any news? Why, what news could there be more novel than this, of a Macedonian vanquishing Hellas? Is Philip dead? No, by heaven, but he is sick. What difference will it make to you? seeing that, if anything happened to him, ye will make yourselves another Philip.” And again,<sup>l</sup> “Let us sail for Macedonia. Prithee where shall we

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<sup>k</sup> *Demosthenes, Philippic i. § 10.*

<sup>l</sup> *Philippic i. § 44.*

come to anchor? Why, the war itself will find out the rotten points in Philip's dominions."\*

The whole force of the remark would have been diminished by expressing it simply; but, as it stands, the spirit and quick repartee in the question and reply, and the speaker's retorting on himself as on an opponent, enhanced not merely the dignity of the expression, but the credit of the statement. For the effect of passion

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\* St. Paul makes frequent use of this figure; as in Rom. ix. 19, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Compare Rom. iii. 27—31, and xi. 19, 20. There is also a very majestic instance of it in the prophet Isaiah, ch. lxiii. 1—3.

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?"

'I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'

'Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?'

'I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury.'"

and fervour is never greater than when they seem to spring, unstudied by the orator, from the circumstances of the moment; and the self-asked, self-answered question imitates the impromptu of emotion. For we may say that, as those who are questioned by others in the excitement of the surprise make their rejoinder eagerly and with sincerity, so the rhetorical machinery of question and answer has a fallacious effect upon the hearer, by misleading him to think that the results of previous deliberation have been called forth and spoken on the spur of the moment....\*

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\* The chapter continues to the following effect: "Further then (for the instance in Herodotus has been considered one of the noblest) if in this way.....:" after which there is a fault in the M.S. of the original, which extends to the commencement of the following chapter.

## XIX.

*On the Omission of Conjunctions.*

[It is exceedingly effective when] the expressions are poured out without copulatives, flowing forth like a stream, almost outrunning the thoughts of the speaker. As in Xenophon:<sup>m</sup> “There they were, when the *mélée* began, pushing, battling, slaughtering, being slaughtered.”\*

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\* This well depicts the hurry and confusion of battle, as in like manner the busy turmoil of life is expressed by our Lord, in St. Luke, ch. xvii. 26—29.

“As it was in the days of Noë, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

“They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noë entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

“But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”

<sup>m</sup> *Agesilaus*, ch. ii. § 12.

So Eurylochus in Homer:—<sup>n</sup>

“ At thy command,  
We went through thickets close, renowned Ulysses,  
We found in leafy glades fair mansions reared.”\*

For this disconnection of the words, combined with their rapid sequence, is significant of the agitation which impedes the speaker, while it

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\* More than one translator has failed to mark the appropriateness of the short broken sentences in which Eurylochus relates, but can scarcely relate, the loss of his companions, whom Circe with her potions had turned into swine. The lines introductory to his narrative I shall quote from the noble and Homeric translation of the *Odyssey*, by the late Mr. Philip Worsley:—

“ Then sought Eurylochus the swift black ship,  
The bitter fortune of his friends to tell ;  
Nor when he came there, could he stir a lip,  
Nor the thing shew that in his soul did swell.  
Tongueless he stood, heart-wounded, weak to  
quell  
The agony within ; a dark dumb rain  
Of weeping ever from his eyelids fell ;  
Much did we wonder and enquire his pain,  
Till words at last he found his anguish to make  
plain.”

<sup>n</sup> *Odyssey*, x. 251.



forces him to speak. So skilfully did Homer use *asyndeton*, the omission of conjunctions.\*

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\* Cæsar used this figure to express the uninterrupted rapidity of his victory, in the famous sentence, "I came, I saw, I conquered."

Milton uses it to describe the chaotic accumulation of horrors in the forlorn march of the fallen angels, as they pass—

"('er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,

Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,

A universe of death."—Paradise Lost, Bk. ii. 620.

## XX.

*On the accumulation of several Figures of Rhetoric  
in a single passage.*

FEW things are more effective than an assemblage of rhetorical figures, when two or three, as if in the bonds of partnership, throw into a common fund their strength, persuasiveness, beauty; as, for example, in the speech against Meidias, the instances of *asyndeton* interwoven with the repetitions of words (*anaphoræ*) and the graphic description. “For there are some things,” says Demosthenes,<sup>o</sup> “which the victim could not even report to a third party, out of all that the assailant might do by his bearing, by his look, by his tone.” Then, not to keep the oration halting,—since it is for calmness to stand

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<sup>o</sup> *Speech against Meidias*, p. 537, ed. Reiske.

still; but passion, the transport and commotion of the soul, delights in freedom unrestrained,— forthwith he sprang off to fresh applications of *asyndeton* and *repetition*. “By his bearing, by his look, by his tone, when seeking to insult, when anxious to injure, when smiting with the fist, when slapping in the face.” By these words the orator imitates exactly the assailant, by their rapid succession he strikes the understanding of the judges. Then after that again, like the gusts of a hurricane, making a new onset: “When striking with the fist, when slapping in the face,” he cries, “these are the things that stir men, these that put them from their patience, when unused to being bespattered with insult. No man, in the telling, could exhibit half their horror.”\* Accordingly, the

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\* Compare Burke's description of Hyder Ali's descent upon the Carnatic:—“Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived, and which no tongue can adequately tell. All the horrors of war before known or heard of, were mercy to that new

proper character of the two figures (repetition of connecting links, omission of ordinary copulatives) is entirely maintained by the continuously connected disconnectedness. So his order indeed is disorderly, but it is an orderly disorder.

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havoc. A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house, destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants flying from their flaming villages, in part were slaughtered ; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect of rank, or sacredness of function, fathers torn from children, husbands from wives, enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry, and amidst the goading spears of drivers, and the trampling of pursuing horses, were swept into captivity, in an unknown and hostile land. Those who were able to evade this tempest fled to the walled cities. But escaping from fire, sword, and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine.”—Speech on the Nabob of Arcot’s debts.

We may cite also the famous passage in Bossuet’s Funeral Sermon upon the Duchess of Orleans, stricken down in the prime of her youth and beauty:—“O nuit désastreuse ! O nuit effroyable, où retentit tout à coup, comme un éclat de tonnerre, cette étonnante nouvelle ; Madame se meurt, Madame est morte.”

## XXI.

*That Copulative Particles detract from vigour of Expression.*

Now add, if you choose, the ordinary copulatives in the Isocratean style:—"Assuredly this too must not be overlooked, that there are many things the assailant might do, in the first place by his bearing, in the second place by his look, yea moreover by his very tone;" and you will perceive that, by altering the rest of it in the same way, all the rapidity and abruptness of its passion, when levelled into smoothness by the copulatives, falls pointless on the ear, and has its fire extinguished in the process. For just as to bind the limbs of runners is to take from them all their impetus, so the language of passion ill brooks to be shackled by conjunctions and the like appendages. For they hinder the freedom of its course and its flight as missile from an engine.

## XXII.

*On the effect of Inversions, to produce an impression of sincerity or to arrest attention.*

**HYPERBATA** or inversions are to be ranged under the same class. *Hyperbaton* consists in an order of words or thoughts thrown out of the natural sequence, which conveys a very real impression of impassioned earnestness. For when actually angry or terrified or vehemently excited either by rivalry or by any other of the innumerable, indescribable host of human passions, under such circumstances men quit their path, when they have begun with one thing frequently spring off to another, interpose parentheses without any connection, then wheel back again to the original subject, are torn suddenly this way and that by their excitement acting like a fitful wind, and, in short, invert in a hundred

different ways the words, the thoughts, the order, out of the natural sequence. And in the same way, with the best writers, by the use of *hyperbaton*, imitation produces the effects of nature. For then art is perfect when it seems to be nature, then nature is effective when unobserved it embraces art. Take for example the words of Dionysius the Phocæan in Herodotus:<sup>p</sup> “It is the critical moment of our lives, O Ionians, for freedom or for bondage, and that the bondage of runaways. Now therefore, flinch not from exertion and endurance, by brief toil to win lasting victory over your enemies.” Here the ordinary arrangement would have been, “O Ionians, now is the time for you to consent to laborious requirements, for it is the critical moment of our lives.” But he transposed the words, “O Ionians,” beginning at once with the source of alarm ; so as at first, out of regard to the pressing terror, not

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<sup>p</sup> *Herodotus, bk. vi. ch. 11.*

even at all to accost his hearers. But secondly, he inverted the order of the thoughts; for before saying that they ought to endure toil, which is the real object of his exhortation, he first of all assigns the reason why they ought to endure it, by his words, “It is the critical moment of our lives;” so that what follows seems undesigned and forced from him. Still more is Thucydides an adept in severing by transpositions things that by nature would seem most closely united and inseparable. But Demosthenes,\* though

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\* A fine illustration of *hyperbaton* is to be found in Burke’s Appeal from the new to the old Whigs, where he invokes the genius of Montesquieu, enlarges upon the vastness of his learning and industry, extols his powers both physical and mental, unfolds the scope and successfully executed plan of his gigantic speculations, and finally analyzes the peculiarities of his temperament, in order at length to found, upon this author’s admiration of it, an argument in favour of the English Constitution. “Place, for instance, before your eyes, such a man as Montesquieu. Think of a genius not born in every country, or every time; a man gifted by nature with a penetrating, aquiline eye; with a judgment prepared with the most extensive erudition; with an herculean robustness of mind, and



with fewer idiosyncrasies in his style than the historian, exceeds every one in the untiring use of the figure ; by it not merely giving the appearance of depth of earnestness and unpremeditated utterance, but moreover hurrying his hearers on with him into the intricacies of his long inversions. For not unfrequently, after suspending

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nerves not to be broken with labour ; a man who could spend twenty years in one pursuit. 'I think of a man, like the universal patriarch in Milton (who had drawn up before him in his prophetic vision the whole series of the generations which were to issue from his loins), a man capable of placing in review, after having brought together from the East, the West, the North and the South, from the coarseness of the rudest barbarism to the most refined and subtle civilization, all the schemes of government which had ever prevailed amongst mankind, weighing, measuring, collating, and comparing them all, joining fact with theory, and calling into council, upon all this infinite assemblage of things, all the speculations which have fatigued the understandings of profound reasoners in all times !—Let us then consider, that all these were but so many preparatory steps to qualify a man, and such a man, tinctured with no national prejudice, with no domestic affection, to admire, and to hold out to the admiration of mankind, the Constitution of England."

the sentence with which he began, and midway, as into an alien and inappropriate construction, thrusting in, parenthetically, a crowd of extraneous matters, having by this means filled his hearer with anxiety lest the sentence should utterly break down, and forced him to sympathize intensely with the perilous effort of the orator, at last beyond expectation, yet in due time, crowning all with the long-desired conclusion, if only by the hazardous and precarious character of such complications, he strikes a far more telling blow. The instances that occur are so numerous that citations may be spared.

## XXIII.

*On the Rhetorical Plural.*

THE same word in its different cases,\* the same subject under different designations,† the same truth expressed by antithesis,‡ and the gradual

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\* *Polyptoton*.—We have an example of this in the original text of 2 Cor. xii. 14, where St. Paul says,—

“For I seek not yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.”

But the English language being almost devoid of cases scarcely admits the use of this figure.

† *Athroismos* or *Congeries*.—By such a group of terms does Falstaff express his indifference to mere physical excellence in his recruits:—

“Care I for the limb, the thewes, the stature, bulk and big assemblance of a man! Give me the spirit, Master Shallow.”—King Henry IV. Part ii., Act iii., Scene 2.

‡ *Antimetabolé*.—This figure is not a very common one, and the instances of it seldom rise into sublimity. It is, indeed, to some extent a play upon words; as in the

rising of a climax,\* are all highly effective, as you know, and coöperate for general loftiness of tone and feeling, as well as ornament. How largely do the interchanges of cases, tenses, persons, numbers and genders, diversify and enliven style. Nor, believe me, is it only words singular

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insult, "You are not fit to carry offal to a bear," and the pretended recantation, "You *are* fit to carry offal to a bear." We have a specimen of it in the conversation between Dr. Primrose and his wife, when Moses returns with the gross of green spectacles :—" ' And so,' returned she, ' we have parted with the colt, and have only got a gross of green spectacles, with copper rims and shagreen cases ! A murrain take such trumpery. The blockhead has been imposed upon, and should have known his company better !' ' There, my dear,' cried I, ' you are wrong ; he should not have known them at all.' "

\* Lord Brougham introduces a fine instance of a climax in beginning the peroration of his speech for Queen Caroline :—" Such, my lords, is the case now before you ! Such is the evidence in support of this measure—evidence inadequate to prove a debt—impotent to deprive of a civil right—ridiculous to convict of the lowest offence—scandalous if brought forward to support a charge of the highest nature which the law knows—monstrous to ruin the honour, to blast the name of an English Queen !

in form with a plural force that are ornamental: as in the lines,—

“Forthwith upon the shores the countless host  
Were darting swift, or stood and shouted loud;”—

but a thing more worthy of note is, that there are occasions when plurals fall with more pomp upon the ear, courting notice by the mere multitude which that number expresses: as in the “*Œdipus Tyrannus*” of Sophocles,—<sup>a</sup>

“O hymeneal rites, unhallowed rites,  
That out of us whom ye did breed at first,  
Bred offspring by your offspring. Hence arose  
A monstrous tangle of affinities,  
With fathers, brothers, children, all confounded,  
With wives, brides, mothers, and a brood of ills  
Foul as the world e’er witnessed.”\*

For “fathers, brothers, children,” designates

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\* According to the tragic story of *Œdipus*, he unwittingly slew his own father, then as unwittingly was joined in marriage to his own mother; hence he was father of his brothers, brother of his children, child of his wife; while on the other hand, that unhappy bride and wife was the mother of her own husband.

<sup>a</sup> *Line 1403.*

Œdipus alone, as the following words Jocasta alone; but nevertheless the number by flowing into the plurals helped also to pluralize the calamities. And like the multiplication in the line,—

“Then Hectors and Sarpedons sped them forth,”

is that in Plato which we have elsewhere quoted, in reference to the Athenians: “There are no Pelops’s, nor yet Cadmus’s, nor yet Ægyptus’s, and Danaus’s, nor the rest of the crowd of foreign extraction, to share our citizenship, but we are pure Greeks, no mongrel race,” and so on.\* For naturally matters win attention by their more imposing appearance, when every name employed is thus brought up like a throng. However, this should not be done, except where the subject admits of amplifica-

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\* Thus Macaulay says of the Puritans, that “they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstons and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars.”

† *Menexenus*, vol. v. p. 297.

tion, enlargement, exaggeration, or passion, severally or together. Since to have bells at all points of the harness shews too much affectation.

## XXIV.

*On the Rhetorical Singular.*

AGAIN, on the other hand, to leave the plural and express the collected group in the singular sometimes has a very fine effect, as in Demosthenes:<sup>•</sup>—“Furthermore all Peloponnese was at feud;” as in Herodotus:<sup>†</sup>—“And you know, when Phrynichus exhibited his play of ‘The Capture of Miletus,’ the whole theatre fell a-weeping.” For the compression of the number from the distributive into the collective is a kind of personification. In both kinds the beauty of expression is due, I think, to the same cause; namely, that the expansion of singulars into plurals, and the condensation of

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• *Speech on the Crown*, p. 231, ed. Reiske.

† *Book vi. ch. 21.*



plurals into some fine-sounding designation in the singular, through the astonishment and surprise excited at the unforeseen transition, are presumed to spring from vehement emotion.\*

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\* Thus in Macaulay we read that, after the acquittal of the Seven Bishops, "as the news spread, streets and squares, market-places and coffee-houses, broke forth into acclamations." So again, when the report of William's wound at the battle of the Boyne reached France, that "Paris was roused at dead of night by the arrival of a courier who brought the joyful intelligence that the heretic, the parricide, the mortal enemy of the greatness of France, had been struck dead by a cannon-ball in the sight of the two armies."

## XXV.

*On the Historic Present.*

By introducing what is past in time as present and occurring, you will raise the expression out of mere narrative to a dramatic presentation; as in Xenophon:<sup>u</sup>—"A man having fallen under the hoofs of Cyrus's charger, with his sword strikes it in the belly; whereupon, the beast rearing, unseats Cyrus, and he falls to the ground." This form of expression Thucydides uses almost constantly.\*

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\* This so-called *historic present* has gone out of fashion with our modern historians. There might be a suspicion of pedantry in the use of it; but though, perhaps for this reason, it is no characteristic of Hume or Gibbon or Macaulay, its frequent and ever well-timed employment gives variety and vivacity to that account of our early

<sup>u</sup> *Cyropædeia*, vii. 1, 37.

national history which Milton has gathered out of the old chroniclers and enlivened with the charm of his own genius. Take, for example, his picture of Harold, after the defeat of the Norwegians, feeling in full security, "sitting jollily at dinner," when "news is brought him, that Duke William of Normandy was arrived at Pevensey. Harold .....in great haste marches to London. Thence, not tarrying for supplies which were on their way towards him, hurries into Sussex (for he was always in haste since the day of his coronation), and ere the third part of his army could be well put in order, finds the Duke about nine miles from Hastings."

## XXVI.

*On the rhetorical employment of the Second Person.*

A DRAMATIC turn is given in like manner also by the variation of the *persons*. This often makes the hearer seem involved in the very midst of the dangers, as,—

“Fresh and unwearied you would say they met,  
So stoutly were they fighting.”<sup>v</sup>

And in Aratus,—<sup>w</sup>

“Do not thou  
In that month venture on the stormy sea.”

In much the same way Herodotus:<sup>x</sup> “From the city of Elephantine you will sail up; then you will come to a smooth plain; having passed through this district, again you will embark on board another vessel, and sail on for twelve

<sup>v</sup> *Homer, Iliad*, xv. 697.

<sup>w</sup> *Phænomena*, v. 287.

<sup>x</sup> *Book ii. ch. 29.*

days, and after that you will reach a great city, named Meroë.” Do you see, my friend, how he carries your mind along with him from place to place, so that you rather see than hear? All such expressions of direct personal address, make the hearer a participator in the actual proceedings. So, when you address yourself as if to one person in particular, instead of people in general,—

“ Scarce couldst thou tell which warrior-host among Tydides fought,”—

you will more move the feelings and arouse the attention and command the sympathies of your hearer, under the excitement of an address directed expressly to himself.\*

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\* It will be remembered that Sir Walter Scott avails himself of this device in his fine opening to the Second Canto of the Lay of the Last Minstrel :—

“ If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,  
Go visit it by the pale moonlight.”

‡ *Iliad*, v. 85.

## XXVII.

*On varying from one Person to another.*

SOMETIMES, moreover, the writer in his narrative about a person, suddenly breaks off and assumes the character of the person himself, a figure which indicates a lively access of passion :—

“ Then Hector shouting loud the Trojans bade  
Fall on the ships, nor heed the gory spoils.  
‘ The man that lingers from the ships apart  
There will I do to death.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

The narrative, as proper to himself, the poet gave in his own words; the abrupt threat he assigned to the fervid spirit of the commander, suddenly, without any note of warning; for a parenthesis to the effect that “Hector said so and so,” would have been frigid; but, as it

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<sup>2</sup> *Iliad*, xv. 346.

stands, the transitional link is anticipated by the transition itself.\* Accordingly the use of the figure is, when the crisis being urgent allows the writer no time for delay, but compels an immediate transition from person to person, as in Hecatæus:—"Now Ceyx being alarmed at this, straightway desired the Heracleidæ to leave

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\* Goldsmith begins his exquisitely graceful ballad of Edwin and Angelina without the least explanatory introduction:—

"Turn, gentle hermit of the dale,  
And guide my lonely way  
To where yon taper cheers the vale  
With hospitable ray."

The perfection of taste shewn in this way of beginning will become clear to any one who attempts to supply a preface without impairing the beauty of the poem.

The Homeric passage has been compared by Addison with the lines in the Fourth Book of the *Paradise Lost*, where Milton tells us that Adam and Eve—

"Both stood,  
Both turned, and under open sky adored  
The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heaven,  
Which they beheld; the moon's resplendent globe,  
And starry pole: Thou also mad'st the night,  
Maker Omnipotent, and Thou the day."

the country; for I am not able to assist you; that therefore you may not both perish yourselves, and bring calamity upon me, withdraw to some other people.” Demosthenes against Aristogeiton<sup>a</sup> employed this variation of person after another fashion, to produce a quick transition and to rouse emotion:—“Shall there not be found,” he cries, “a feeling of disgust or even of anger in any one of you at the outrages of this impudent scoundrel, who—O thou most pestilent villain! when that licence of tongue was débarred thee, not by lattices, nor yet by doors, which any other might have burst.” Thus with the sense imperfect he suddenly breaks off, and in his passion all but tears a word asunder between the first person and the third—“he who—O thou most pestilent”—then turns his address upon Aristogeiton; so that, while seeming to wander from the mark by the outburst of passion, he far better

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<sup>a</sup> *Page 778, ed. Reiske.*



achieved his aim. In like manner Penelope :<sup>b</sup>—

“ Herald, why com'st thou from the suitor lords ?  
Is it to bid the handmaids of Ulysses  
Give o'er their tasks, and tend the feast for them ?  
O that their feasts were numbered, this their last,  
Their suit nonsuited, concert disconcerted !—  
Who by your gatherings spoil a store of wealth,  
Ancestral right of sage Telemachus ;  
Who, being children, never heard your sires  
Tell of the great Ulysses.”\*

\* So in Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 5, Scene 2 :—

“ Yet I 'll not shed her blood ;  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster.  
Yet she must die, else she 'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then put out the light :  
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
I can again thy former light restore,  
Should I repent me :—but once put out thine,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean heat,  
That can thy light relume.”

<sup>b</sup> *Homer, Odyssey, iv. 681.*

## XXVIII.

*On Periphrasis.*

PERIPHRA<sup>s</sup>IS again is conducive to elevation of style, as no one, I imagine, would hesitate to admit. For as in music, by the help of turns and flourishes the dominant sound is brought out more agreeably :\* so a periphrasis often harmonizes with the direct expression, and greatly increases the beauty of the rhythm, especially if it be pleasantly tempered, and free from everything harsh and inflated. This is well shewn by Plato in the introduction to his Funeral Oration :<sup>c</sup>—“To these, then, we have paid the last duties, and now they tread the destined road, having been escorted on their

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\* Or, ‘As variations add to the charm of the principal theme.’

<sup>c</sup> *Menexenus*, ch. 5.

way with public honours and private affection, by their country and their kindred." Their death he calls a "destined road;" their funeral "the public honours of their country's escort." Does he not, I ask, hereby with nice taste amplify the thought, by the mode of expression adding music to its prose, shedding over it a concert of sweet sounds in the melodiousness of the periphrasis? So again Xenophon:<sup>d</sup>—

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\* It is by a splendid group of such periphrases that Burke gives the description of chivalry:—"The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness."—*Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

<sup>d</sup> *Cyropædeia*, i. 5, 12.

“Toil you esteem the guide to a happy life. It is a glorious and a soldierly gain that you have garnered in your souls; for in praise more than in all things else you find enjoyment.” By saying not simply, “You are willing to toil,” but, “Toil you take to be your guide to a happy life,” and following it up with a corresponding amplitude of expression, in the praise he embraced moreover a great idea. Witness again that inimitable expression in Herodotus:<sup>e</sup>—“After the pillaging of her temple by the Scythians, the goddess inflicted upon those men the disorder of another sex.”\*

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\* A humorous and pointed instance of *periphrasis* may be quoted from “Artemus Ward.” Instead of telling a young gentleman he should like to slay him, he says, “‘Sez I, ‘Fair youth, do you know what I’d do with you if you was my son?’ ‘No,’ sez he. ‘Wal,’ sez I, ‘I’d appint your funeral to-morrow arternoon, and the *korps* should be ready.’”

<sup>e</sup> *Book i. ch. 105.*

## XXIX.

*On the perils of Periphrasis.*

THERE is more risk, however, in the use of this figure *periphrasis* than of others, unless it be employed with taste. Else it at once falls without force upon the ear, with a taint of the absurd and the vulgar. Hence even Plato (ever keen after figures and sometimes unseasonably so) comes in for a share of ridicule, when he says in "The Laws,"<sup>1</sup> that "neither a silver nor a golden Plutus (god of wealth) should be allowed to dwell enshrined in the city;" for, say the critics, had he been forbidding them to keep sheep, obviously he would have said "an ovine and a bovine Plutus."\*

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\* So, among the innumerable beauties of Keats, we may question the taste with which, in his *Endymion*, he speaks of lips as "slippery blisses," and eyes as "milky sovereignties."

<sup>1</sup> *Book vii.* 632.

Here, my dear friend, our digressive discussion on the serviceableness of the figures of rhetoric for style and sublimity may come to a close. They all tend to invest language with more of passion and animation; and passion conduces to sublimity, just as much as the milder feelings to pleasure.

## XXX.

*On choice Language.*

SINCE however the thought and the expression commonly illustrate one another, let us, if there be anything yet unsaid in regard to the latter element, now embrace the consideration of it. You are well aware, and therefore it would be superfluous to explain at length, how marvellously the selection of the exactly appropriate terms and noble words carries along and fascinates the hearers; how, being the chief aim of all orators and authors, it brings forth upon their works, as upon the masterpieces of sculpture, a bloom of majesty, grace, tone,\* weight, force, power, and whatsoever

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\* The word here rendered "tone" means literally "a goodly soiling," and was applied to the rust and other marks of antiquity which time produces upon bronze and marble.

else, if ought else there be, and animates the record as it were with a vocal spirit. For indeed terms of beauty are the appropriate illumination of thoughts.\* Nevertheless, a

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\* If it were necessary to single out an English author who never, or almost never, allows the grace and loftiness of expression to fall below the majesty of the thought he wishes to express, there are few, if any, who could claim to be chosen in preference to Gray. We may take, for an example of his manner, the stanza of "The Bard," which describes the death of Edward III., and the accession and impending doom of Richard II. :—

"Mighty victor, mighty lord !  
 Low on his funeral couch he lies ;  
 No pitying heart, no eye, afford  
 A tear to grace his obsequies.  
 Is the sable warrior fled ?  
 Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.  
 The swarm that in thy noontide heat were born ?  
 Gone to salute the rising morn.  
 Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr blows,  
 While proudly riding o'er the azure realm  
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes ;  
 Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm ;  
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwinds' sway,  
 That hushed in grim repose expects his evening prey."  
 The stately march of the Ode never falters, from its  
 beginning of passionate patriotism to its close of exultant



great parade of expressions is not proper under all circumstances; for to dress up trivial matters in fine grand terms, would be much the same as putting a huge tragic mask upon an infant. But in poetry and [history].....\*

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martyrdom, when, like Cato preferring the cause of the vanquished, or Athanasius against the world, the bard of Snowdon, alone against a victorious army, hurls his defiance at the ruthless king:—

“Be thine despair, and sceptred care;

Tó triumph and to die are mine.”

\* There is a break at this point in the M.S. of the original.

## XXXI.

*On homely expressions.*

.....and there is genius in that line of Anacreon:--“O land of Thrace, my sweetheart now no more.” In this way, too, that excellent phrase in Theopompus seems to me to be most expressive by the closeness of the analogy (though Cæcilius, I know not on what grounds, finds fault with it), where he speaks of Philip being “able to stomach anything in the way of business.” A colloquial phrase is sometimes far more expressive than any ornament; for it is recognised at once from every-day life, and the familiar carries with it a presumption of credibility. So, as applied to a man submitting without impatience and even with satisfaction to meannesses and indignities, to

advance his interests, that "stomaching anything in the way of business" is a most significant piece of phraseology. Of the same sort are those expressions in Herodotus:<sup>g</sup>—"Cleomenes," he says, "having gone mad, took a knife, and cut up his own flesh into small pieces, till he made mincemeat of his whole body and killed himself." And again:<sup>h</sup>—"Pythes went on fighting at the ship, till he was regularly chopped to pieces." For these touch very closely upon the colloquial, but are saved from being colloquial by their expressiveness.\*

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\* Fault is sometimes found with certain expressions in Milton's *Comus*, verse 290:—

"As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips;"  
and verse 455:—

"A thousand liveried angels lacky her:"

but there is a quaint simplicity about the phrases, so suitable to the context in which they are found, that a true taste ought rather to be charmed by it, than in any wise offended. In like manner the dirge in *Cymbeline*

<sup>g</sup> *Book vi. ch. 75.*

<sup>h</sup> *Book vii. 181.*

gains point and effect from the very homeliness of its language :—

“ Fear no more the heat o’ the sun,  
Nor the furious winter’s rages ;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and ta’en thy wages :  
Golden lads and girls all must  
As chimney-sweepers come to dust.”

We must admit the bathos, when Pitt winds up a passage of sonorous declamation against the coalition of his opponents by the words, “ I forbid the banns :” but we are less inclined to agree with Lord Mahon’s censure upon Burke’s description of the “ sans-culotte carcase-butchers and the philosophers of the shambles,” pricking their dotted lines upon the hide of their unconscious victim, while the question passes round, “ how he cuts up, how he tallows in the caul, or on the kidneys ?” His purpose is to represent the Duke of Bedford, his assailant, as exposed in stupid unconsciousness to ignominious peril, and the representation is sufficiently lively.

## XXXII.

*On combination of Metaphors.*

Now, as to the number also of metaphors admissible in combination, Cæcilius seems to side with those who would limit it to two, or at most three. However, Demosthenes is the proper standard in this as in other matters. The proper occasion for their use is where the passions are driven along like a winter-torrent, and so draw along with them the thronging crowd of metaphors, as of necessity :—"Pestilent, fawning wretches," he cries, "fiends, that have torn the limbs of their own fatherlands; that in their cups have pledged away freedom erst to Philip, now to Alexander; that measure happiness by their bellies and all that is vilest; while liberty and exemption from

tyrants, the rule and standard of all blessings to the Greeks of yore, they have thrown to the ground."<sup>1</sup> There the multiplicity of the tropes is veiled by the indignation of the orator against the traitors. This being so, Aristotle, indeed, and Theophrastus say that bold metaphors may be softened down by such expressions as "so to speak," or "as it were," or "if I may so say," or "if I may venture on such an expression." For the words of extenuation, they say, remedy the boldness. But I, for my part, while accepting these, nevertheless affirm that for multiplicity and boldness of metaphors, as I said also in the case of figures generally, seasonable and vehement emotions and genuine sublimity are the proper antidotes, since by the surging on of their career these are apt to carry all else headlong before them, even to the extent of claiming as necessary to their own expression those daring figures, giving

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<sup>1</sup> *Speech on the Crown*, p. 324, ed. Reiske.

the hearer no opportunity, in his sympathy with the speaker's enthusiasm, to criticize their mere number.\*

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\* The weighty and sonorous eloquence of Milton's prose abounds in simile and metaphor, which seem ever to glow with the passion and earnestness of the writer. There are many noble instances in the *Areopagitica*; for example, where he has been describing the awakening thought of England combined with an undaunted energy in self-defence, and thus concludes:—"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle muing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unsealing her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance." Again, towards the close:—"When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of truth. For who knows not that truth

But certainly in set subjects and descriptions, if nowhere else, there is nothing so aptly expressive as an unbroken chain of metaphors. By this means in Xenophon<sup>j</sup> the anatomy of the human tabernacle is splendidly drawn, and yet more marvellously in Plato.<sup>k</sup> The head of man he calls an acropolis, representing the neck as an isthmus interposed between it and the breast, and the vertebræ planted beneath as hinges. Pleasure, again, he calls the bait of viciousness to man; the tongue the assaye of flavours; the heart a knot of the veins, and a fountain of the swiftly circling blood, appointed

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is strong, next to the Almighty; she needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power. Give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as old Proteus did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah did before Ahab, until she be adjured into her own likeness."

<sup>j</sup> *Memorabilia*, i. 4.

<sup>k</sup> *In the Timæus*.



for the chamber of the guard. The various arteries of the body he calls lanes or galleries. "And for the palpitation of the heart under expectation of peril and the excitement of passion, as it is by nature fiery; to prevent mischief, the gods," he says, "implanted the lungs, soft, bloodless, and porous, as it were a cushion, that whenever its passion boiled up, by beating against a yielding substance, it might do itself no injury." Further, the seat of the desires he described as the chambers of the women, the seat of passion as those of the men; the spleen, however, as the napkin of the inside, whence, by being filled with what the liver rejects it grows great and turgid. "After this," he continues, "they covered all with flesh, setting the flesh, like wrappings of felt, to guard every part against injuries from without." The blood, again, he called the pasturage of the flesh; and for the supply of its nourishment they cut channels, he says, through the body, like trenches in gardens, that

the rills of the veins may flow, as from a perennial spring, the body being perforated. And when the end comes, the cables of the soul, he says, are loosed, like the cables of a ship, and she is let go free.\* These and a thousand

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\* Compare with this the description of The Beloved in the Song of Solomon, ch. v. 11—16; and the sweet stanza in Spenser's Epithalamion:—

“Tell me, ye merchants daughters, did ye see  
 So fayre a creature in your towne before?  
 So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,  
 Adorn'd with beautyes grace and vertues store:  
 Her goodly eyes like saphyres shining bright,  
 Her forehead yvory white,  
 Her cheekes lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,  
 Her lips lyke cherries charming men to byte,  
 Her breast lyke to a bowl of creame uncrudded,  
 Her paps lyke lyllyes budded,  
 Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre,  
 And all her body lyke a pallace fayre,  
 Ascending up, with many a stately stayre,  
 To Honors seat and Chastities sweet bowre.  
 Why stand ye still, ye virgins, in amaze,  
 Upon her so to gaze,  
 Whiles ye forget your former lay to sing,  
 To which the woods did answer, and your eccho  
 ring.”

others after the same fashion are crowded together; but those that have been adduced suffice to shew that tropes are grand in character, that metaphors conduce to the Sublime, and that their special and principal use is in passages of strong emotion and vivid description.\*

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\* This rhetorical apparatus shines with all its splendour in Burke's account of Lord Chatham's administration in 1766. After speaking with the highest respect of the great minister's life and character, and of "his fall from power, which, like death, canonizes and sanctifies a great character," "he made an administration," he tells us, "so checkered and speckled; he put together a piece of joinery, so crossly indented and whimsically dovetailed; a cabinet so curiously inlaid; such a piece of diversified mosaic; such a tessellated pavement without cement: here a bit of black stone, and there a bit of white; patriots and courtiers, king's friends and republicans, whigs and tories; treacherous friends and open enemies; that it was indeed a very curious show; but utterly unsafe to touch, and unsure to stand on." Then, as a consequence of this, "when his face was hid but for a moment, his whole system was on a wide sea, without chart or compass." The gentlemen, his particular friends, had never presumed upon any opinion of their own; accordingly, "deprived of his guiding influence, they were whirled about, the sport of every gust, and easily driven into any

That the use of tropes, however, like all other rhetorical graces, carries ever a temptation to excess, must be clear even without my remarking it. For even Plato comes in for some rough handling on this ground, because, by a kind of phrenzy of language, he is often carried on into intemperate rugged metaphors

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port ; and as those who joined with them in manning the vessel were the most directly opposite to his opinions, measures, and character, and far the most artful and most powerful of the set, they easily prevailed, so as to seize upon the vacant, unoccupied, and derelict minds of his friends ; and instantly they turned the vessel wholly out of the course of his policy." And this too, even long before the close of the first session of his administration, "for even then, even before this splendid orb was entirely set, and while the western horizon was in a blaze with his descending glory, on the opposite quarter of the heavens arose another luminary, and, for his hour, became lord of the ascendant."

Then follows a description of the fascinating eloquence and the too facile temperament of Charles Townshend, "one, to whom a single whiff of incense withheld gave much greater pain, than he received delight in the clouds of it, which daily rose about him from the prodigal superstition of innumerable admirers."—Speech on American Taxation.

and allegorical bombast. "For it is not easy to understand," says he, "that a city ought to be tempered like a bowl of wine; wherein the liquor stirs madly till it is chastened by another and a sober god, from which good companionship it produces a good and temperate draught." For to call water "a sober god," and the mixing of it with wine "chastening," is the language, they say, of a poet, and one anything but sober. Attacking slight defects of this kind, and with no better reason, Cæcilius, in his essay in praise of Lysias, had the confidence to represent that orator as altogether Plato's superior, under the influence of two headstrong feelings; for, while loving Lysias more even than himself, he nevertheless more entirely hates Plato than he loves Lysias. Only the premises which in his captiousness he puts forward, cannot be granted, as he supposed; for Lysias, he represents as free from all defects and blemishes,

while Plato has fallen into them in many places. But this contrast does not hold good, even approximately.

## XXXIII.

*On accuracy contrasted with genius.*

Now let us assume the existence of an author in fact free from all defect and without reproach. May we not yet fairly raise the question on this point generally, whether in poetry and eloquence grandeur amidst some faults be not superior to a correct mediocrity, perfect and faultless though it be? Yes, and further, whether in literature, excellences would justly win the prize by their quantity or by their quality? For these considerations are proper to a discussion on the Sublime, and by all means demand adjudication. I know for my own part that the loftiest genius is seldomest free from defects (for uniform accuracy verges upon insignificance, but in the grand and Sublime, as in vast fortunes, there is sure to be

something neglected); and is it not even a necessary result that inferior and second-rate genius remains generally free from slips and errors, because it never makes a bold venture, nor yet attempts the loftiest aims, while the lofty and exalted through the very exaltation is liable to fall?\*. Nor yet do I forget, for another thing, that it is always rather on their worse side that all human works are challenged by criticism, and that of their defects the recollection lingers on indelible, while the memory of their beauty quickly passes away. It is true, I have myself adduced not a few faults from Homer and the other mighty masters, and am as little content as may be with their lapses; yet I esteem them not so much

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\* So Goldsmith, introducing to the world his exquisite story, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, says with a modest magnanimity, "There are an hundred faults in this thing, and an hundred things might be said to prove them beauties. But it is needless. A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity."



faults committed with the eyes open, as oversights that have slipped in unawares, through inattention, by chance and hazard, amid the soaring of their genius; and, in spite of them, I think that the greater excellences, notwithstanding occasional inequalities, deserve to have the palm awarded them, even if for nothing else, simply for their genius itself. For no doubt Apollonius, who wrote *The Voyage of the Argonauts*, is never found tripping. Would you then rather be Homer or Apollonius? In pastorals Theocritus is preëminent, only the setting is now and then faulty.\* *The Erigone* of Eratosthenes is a little poem without a flaw. Is its author, I ask you, a greater poet than Archilochus? And yet Archilochus is constantly setting all rules at defiance, and that

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\* The text of the original here seems to be in some way defective. It is reasonable to suppose that Longinus here favourably contrasts Theocritus with some other pastoral poet of inferior genius, who, however, more nicely observed the proprieties of the "mise en scène."

under the impulse of the inspiring genius, an impulse difficult to bring under the control of law. Again, in lyric poetry would you rather be Bacchylides or Pindar? And in tragedy, Ion of Chios, or, by heaven, Sophocles? Since Bacchylides and Ion never make mistakes, and are in all points smoothly and elegantly finished ; whereas Pindar and Sophocles, who one while are borne along like a devouring flame, often heedlessly let their fire die out, and sink completely into bathos. Well ! would not any one in his senses, upon a comparison, prefer the single drama of *Œdipus* to the collected works of Ion ?

## XXXIV.

*Comparison of Hypereides and Demosthenes.*

BUT if merits were to be judged by their number, not their intrinsic value, at that rate Hypereides too would certainly take precedence of Demosthenes. For his style is more varied, his excellences more numerous, and he is pretty nearly second-best in all, like the athlete in the fivefold contest, in each branch unable to cope with those who are special professors of it, but carrying off the prize from all who are not. For Hypereides, besides imitating all the merits of Demosthenes, except at least his arrangement of words, embraced also, over and above this, the excellences and graces of Lysias. For indeed where simple language is required, he softens his tone, not uttering everything in the same unvaried strain like Demosthenes.

And in regard to the milder feelings, there is about him the soft flavouring of a pleasant sweetness. He has innumerable urbanities, a delicate sarcasm, a natural polish, a practised skill with the weapons of irony; his jests are not coarse and unmannerly, after the old Attic style, but neatly adapted; his raillery is clever, his sallies of wit abundant, pungent, and well-directed, with a charm over the whole which, to say the truth, is inimitable. In melancholy subjects his genius is entirely at home; in the stores of illustration he is ever copious, and yet with a supreme facility of gliding easily back into his course after every digression; as beyond doubt in his Story of Latona there is the handling of a poet, in his Funeral Oration a pomp of rhetoric almost beyond comparison.

But Demosthenes is no delineator of ordinary feelings; he is concise in style, with no easy flow or fine display; in fact, almost entirely devoid of the whole train of qualities which have just been mentioned. He does however

try at times to be humorous and witty, but people laugh at him rather than with him for his pains; and when he would make approaches to a winning style, he becomes less winning than ever. Had he attempted to write the little piece upon Phryne or that on Athenogenes, still more surely would he have given a foil to the merits of Hypereides. But since the virtues of the one, even if many in number, yet, as springing from an intellect without fervour, are devoid of grandeur, of force, of power to excite the hearer (at any rate no one is moved with awe at reading Hypereides), while the other seized, on the one hand, the tone of sublime feeling and of sublime expression carried to the very top of excellencé, along with lively emotions, exuberance, readiness, rapidity, and, on the other hand, which is the principal thing, that inapproachable faculty of genius and power—while, I say, Demosthenes drew to himself in a mass these gifts from heaven (for human I dare not call them), for this reason, by

the virtues which he has he ever vanquishes his rivals, and, to make up for those which he has not, as it were with the thunders and the lightnings of his eloquence he overpowers the orators of every age; so that one would more readily face the bolts of heaven in their full career, than meet with defiant glances the impassioned feelings which he masses together.

## XXXV.

*That Sublime Writers are careless of niceties, because  
they rival the grandeur and magnificence  
of Nature.*

BUT between Plato and Lysias there is, as I observed, an additional difference; for not only in the quality but also in the quantity of his merits is Lysias far inferior to Plato, exceeding him as much in faults as he falls short of him in excellences. What then was the view of those master-minds, who, disregarding scrupulous accuracy, aimed at all that was noblest in composition? What, besides much else, they kept in view was this, that nature willed that we, that man, should be no mean, no ignoble creature, but introducing us into life and the universe at large, as into a vast assembly, to be as it were spectators of all her

works and her most zealous rivals, she implanted in our souls invincible love of all, wherever it occurs, that is grand and superhuman. Therefore to man's reach of contemplation and intellect not even the whole universe suffices, but his thoughts often roam beyond even the bounds of space and time ; and if any one will survey the whole circle of life, and mark the supremacy everywhere of what is prodigious and vast over what is merely fair to see, he will quickly understand the bent of human nature. Hence it is almost an instinct that we follow in giving our admiration, not to small streams, though they be pellucid and useful, but to the Nile and Danube, or Rhine, and far more to the ocean ; and at the little flame which our own hands have kindled, albeit it keeps its radiance unimpaired, we feel not the same wonderment as at the lights of heaven, although they are often eclipsed ; nor indeed do we think such a flame more marvellous than the craters of Etna whose eruptions shoot up from its abyss both



rocks and entire hills, and sometimes pour forth rivers of that strange earth-born and self-enkindled fire. But to all such matters the one rule will apply, that what is useful or in fact necessary is easy to obtain, but that what commands our admiration is ever the uncommon and surprising.

## XXXVI.

*The vindication of Sublime Writers continued.  
Reasons against comparing Sculpture  
with Eloquence.*

IN regard to noble genius in language, where the sublimity is not, as elsewhere, separable from utility and advantage, we should not fail to observe likewise that the authors who have it, while far removed from the infallible, are yet all above the human standard; that while all else bewrays the workman's humanity, the Sublime raises him nigh to the majesty of God; that while freedom from mistakes escapes censure, it is grandeur that commands admiration. Beyond this, what have we more to say? Simply this, that every one of those illustrious authors often by a single success, by a single stroke of genius, redeems the whole of his failures;

simply and conclusively this, that if we were to pick out the blemishes of Homer, of Demosthenes, of Plato, of all the other acknowledged master-minds, and gather them all together, they would be found a very small, nay, an utterly insignificant fraction compared with the unblemished achievements of those great masters. Therefore the whole course of time and each succeeding generation, incapable of being distracted by envy, awarded them the palm of victory, and keep it until now, and will, I believe, preserve it, inseparably theirs,—

“So long as streams of water flow,  
Or trees their leaves unfold.”

In answer however to the remark that the faulty Colossus is not superior to The Spearman by Polycleitus, we have, besides several others, this observation to make at the outset, that in art perfection of accuracy excites admiration, but in the productions of nature what is grand; and eloquence is a natural gift. Again, in statues the resemblance to humanity

is looked for, but in eloquence, that which transcends, as I said, the human standard. Nevertheless (to recur to the advice with which our treatise commenced), since accurate finish is for the most part the achievement of art, while lofty range, though with unequal flight, belongs to genius, it is expedient that art should ever extend her assistance to nature ; for the reciprocity of these two would perhaps result in perfection. So far it was necessary to adjudicate on the questions proposed ; but let every man follow his own taste.

## XXXVII.

*On Comparisons and Similes.*

To resumé then; closely allied to metaphors, but differing in a single point, are comparisons and similes.....\*

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\* The end of this chapter, and the beginning of the next, are wanting in the M.S. of the original.

Simile and Metaphor differ simply in this, that in Simile the objects of comparison are set over against one another, while in Metaphor the language appropriate to one of them is actually applied to the other, so that a comparison may be said to be *enfolded* in Metaphor, which is *unfolded* in Simile. Metaphor enacts a part; Simile is like a mirror confronting the features with their own resemblance.

Burke uses Metaphor, for instance, when he says, "Our political architects have taken a survey of the fabrick of the British Constitution:"—but Simile, when he says, "Our Constitution is like our island, which uses and restrains its subject sea."

## XXXVIII.

*On Hyperboles.*

..... and the like: “unless you carry your brains trampled down in your heels.” Hence it is important to know the limit to which, and no further, each may be carried. For sometimes the transgression of that limit nullifies the hyperbole, a slackness comes from the excess of tension, and even the reverse of what was aimed at is sometimes the resultant. At any rate Isocrates fell into a strange puerility, through the ambition of saying everything grandiloquently. For the point he wishes to prove in his Panegyric is, that the Athenian state surpasses the Lacedæmonian in services to the Hellenes. Now, to begin with, in the exordium he makes this

remark: "Moreover, eloquence is of force so great as to be able to strip what is grand of its majesty, and to invest insignificance with grandeur, to give freshness to the bye-past, and treat recent occurrences as matters of antiquity." "Well then," it may be said, "do you intend, Isocrates, in this way, to interchange the historical features of Athens and Sparta?" For in his encomium upon eloquence he as good as put forth a warning and premonition to his hearers to beware of trusting what he himself should say.\* So, as I observed before,

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\* The remark of Isocrates was not only ill-timed but fallacious. It is true that on some isolated occasion the orator may employ his power to pervert the truth and mislead his hearers, as a physician may use his knowledge of drugs, not to cure, but to kill, his patient. But every time that eloquence is found to have been made subservient to a bad cause, the influence of the speaker is diminished, and his art proportionately shorn of its boasted efficacy. The true position and value of rhetoric are philosophically explained and defended by Lord Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning*. He declares that the aim of rhetoric is to fill the imagination with

of figures generally, it may be accepted in regard to hyperbole, that the finest examples are those in which the existence of any

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such observations and images as may assist reason and not overthrow it ; that if we study its abuses, it is, not to practise, but to guard against them ; that speech is certainly more employed to exalt what is honourable than to disguise what is base ; for that all men's words are better than their thoughts or actions ; that Cleon, in Thucydides, being ever advocate of the worse cause, was always inveighing against eloquence and grace of speech, well knowing that in a mean unworthy cause the charm of eloquence is out of the question, though easy enough on the side of honour ; and that, as virtue and goodness cannot be presented to the eye in bodily form, the next best thing is to set them before the imagination by the ornament of words and the liveliest representation. There is often a war, he continues, between the affections and the reason, the affections principally regarding a present good, whilst reason, seeing far before it, chooses the future and capital good. "And therefore as present things strike the imagination most forcibly, reason is generally subdued ; but when eloquence and the power of persuasion raise up remote and future objects, and set them to view as if they were present, then imagination goes over to the side of reason and renders it victorious." On the whole matter he concludes that rhetoric is no more responsible for its occasional perversion and abuse, than logic is for sophisms.



hyperbole is kept in the background. And such is the effect wherever they are called forth by profound emotion in union with a certain majesty of circumstance. Thucydides<sup>1</sup> gives a fine instance in his account of the Athenian army perishing in Sicily. "For when they were in the river," he says, "the Syracusans came down after them and cut them to pieces right and left. Now the water had been fouled at once; but for all that, thickened as it was with mud and stained with gore, draughts of it were drunk, nay, by the majority even fought for." That draughts of mingled gore and mud should not only be drunk but fought for, is made credible by the intensity of the excitement and the whole position. The saying of Herodotus<sup>m</sup> about the Spartans at Thermopylæ is of the same description. "In this spot," he says, "defending themselves with their swords, if they still had any, otherwise

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<sup>1</sup> *Book vii. ch. 84.*

<sup>m</sup> *Book vii. ch. 225.*

with hands and teeth, they were buried under the missiles of the barbarians." In that passage, is it not monstrous, you will say, to speak of fighting even with the teeth against men in armour, and of their having been buried under a mound of darts? But it wins credit on the grounds above stated. For the occurrence does not seem to be introduced simply for the sake of the hyperbole, but the hyperbole to grow reasonably out of the occurrence.\* For, as I am repeatedly saying, there is for every extravagance in language a sufficient

\* This test will be found applicable to nearly all examples of the figure that are really noble. It approves the famous exclamation in Shakspeare's *Richard III*:—

“A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!”  
and the daring plea for his rebellion which Dryden puts into the mouth of Absalom:—

“Desire of greatness is a god-like sin:”  
and the expression in *Deuteronomy* of what Israel might achieve by obedience to Jehovah:—

“How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight!”

apology and a kind of panacea—in the extravagance of the actions and passions themselves. Hence too the jests of comedy, incredible as they are in the abstract, win acceptance through their humour:—

“ He had a piece of land,  
A field no bigger than a Spartan note.”

For laughter too is an emotion, an emotion of pleasure. But Hyperbole may be used as well to depreciate as to extol, exaggeration being applicable in either direction; and in a manner ridicule consists in making what is mean seem meaner still.\*

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\* In *The Spectator*, No. 557, Addison begins his amusing description of civilized insincerity with an instance of Hyperbole:—“Master,” writes the Oriental Ambassador, “the people, where I now am, have tongues farther from their hearts than from London to Bantam, and thou knowest the inhabitants of one of these places do not know what is done in the other.”

Artemus Ward, describing the war-fever in Baldinsville, may be said to have gone far beyond Herodotus in vigour of conception, both by his idea of a company composed exclusively of Commanders-in-Chief, and by the declarations which carry bravery to a limit beyond

which even fancy itself could scarcely venture :—" We'll be chopt into sassage meat before we'll exhibit our coat-tails to the foe. We'll fight till there's nothin left of us but our little toes, and even they shall defiantly wiggle." Absurd as this may seem, it is in fact a rather favourite hyperbole with the ancient poets. For instance, in the Tenth Book of the *Æneid*, when Larides has his hand cut off,—

" Larides' severed hand forlorn  
 Feels blindly for its lord :  
 The quivering fingers, half alive,  
 Twitch with convulsive gripe, and strive  
 To close upon the sword."

Conington's Translation, p. 341.

The agitation of the toes by the amputated foot may be read of in the Third Book of Lucretius, line 653.

## XXXIX.

*On the harmonious structure of Sentences.*

OF the five elements contributory to the Sublime, according at least to our division in the beginning, the fifth yet remains for our consideration. It is that of the general structure or composition. On which head, having in two books delivered what was needed, so far at least as we could grapple with that argument, thus much we would of necessity add for the present subject, that harmony is not only a natural source to mankind of persuasion and pleasure, but also a wonderful instrument of sublimity and emotion. For does not the flute for its part inspire the listeners with certain emotions, filling them with a kind of wild delirious excitement? When it has given to

tune, does it not compel the hearer to move in time to that tune, and to accommodate himself to the air, let him be as unmusical as he will? And, by heaven, do not the tones of the harp, which of themselves have no meaning, often, as you know, by the variations of the sounds and their crashing together and blending in concert, exercise a surprising fascination? Yet here we have but the semblances, the mimicry, of persuasive eloquence, not the genuine effects, which belong, as I said, to the capacity of man. Surely then composition, being as it is a harmony of language, that natural gift whereby not the hearing only but the soul itself is swayed, manœuvring as it does the varied forms of words and thoughts and facts and grace and cadence, all of them the apanage and heritage of our nature, and at the same time by the blending and variation of its tones transfusing the feeling of the speaker into the souls of his hearers, keeping them ever in communion with it, and by the building of word upon word

constructing a fabric of the noble and sublime ; surely, I say, by these processes composition both wields a charm, and leads us along with it, as occasion requires, to the lofty, the noble, the sublime, to all that it includes within its range, exercising over our minds a boundless empire. But it were insanity to doubt a point so confessedly certain. Experience is sufficient proof of it. How noble, for example, is that thought considered, and how fine it really is, which Demosthenes applies to the decree :—"This decree caused the peril then o'erhanging the city to vanish, like passing cloud."\* It is as much

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\* The force of the following criticism depends entirely on the rhythm and cadence of the Greek sentence, which a translation can scarcely hope to imitate or equal. The criticism itself will doubtless call to mind the colloquy in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* of Molière :—"Le Maître de philosophie. 'On peut les mettre premièrement comme vous avez dit : *Belle marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir d'amour.* Ou bien : *D'amour mourir me font, belle marquise, vos beaux yeux.* Ou bien : *Vos yeux beaux d'amour me font, belle marquise, mourir.* Ou bien : *Mourir vos beaux yeux, belle marquise, d'amour me font.*

by the harmony of the words as by the sense that the thought is expressed. For both the whole sentence is in the dactylic rhythm (which is the noblest and sublimest, and for this reason used in the heroic measure, which is the finest we have), and likewise the concluding phrase ; put it where you will away from its own position:--“ This decree like passing cloud caused the peril to vanish,” or cut off but a single syllable:—“ caused it to vanish like a cloud,” and you will understand how greatly the harmony of the sound commends the loftiness of the thought. For the expression “ like passing cloud ” as it stands, with all its four syllables, begins with a spondee, but when

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Ou bien : *Me font vos yeux beaux mourir, belle marquise, d'amour.* M. Jourdain. ‘ Mais de toutes ces façons-là laquelle est la meilleure ? ’ Le Maître de philosophie. ‘ Celle que vous avez dite : *Belle marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir d'amour.* ’ M. Jourdain. ‘ Cependant je n’ai point étudié, et j’ai fait cela tout du premier coup.’ ” It was, indeed, like the order of the words in Demosthenes, a stroke of native genius.



the single syllable is curtailed, the expression "like a cloud" by the curtailment at once diminishes the majesty of the conclusion. As again, if you were to extend the expression, "caused it to vanish like a passing cloud," the meaning is the same, but the effect on the ear is not the same, since by the increase of the final syllables there is a coincident weakening and diminution in the abruptness of the lofty close.\*

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\* For an English example of a sentence as noble in the expression as in the thought, and so finished in structure that, throughout its intricate composition, no single word or clause could, without injury to the beauty of the whole, be placed otherwise than it stands at present, I shall here gladly call attention to that deserved eulogium with which Macaulay, exerting all his incomparable art of style, has paid homage to Milton. "A mightier poet, tried at once by pain, danger, poverty, obloquy and blindness, meditated, undisturbed by the obscene tumult which raged all around him, a song so sublime and so holy that it would not have misbecome the lips of those ethereal Virtues whom he saw, with that inner eye which no calamity could darken, flinging down on the jasper pavement their crowns of amaranth and gold."—History of England, i. 401.

## XL.

*On Composition in general.*

As with the body, so with the utterances of speech, a very eminent source of dignity lies in the combination of the members already fashioned, whereof one, detached from another, by itself has no importance, but all combined fill out a perfect system. In this way grand expressions when scattered and detached make the Sublime as fragmentary as themselves; but when embodied, by their union, and further when embraced in the bond of rhythmical accord, by the rounding of the period, they grow into noble utterance. Indeed we might say that in finished sentences the loftiness and distinction are a clubbing together of numerous contributions. I have sufficiently shewn else-

## XLI.

*That all Tripping Rhythms are alien to Sublimity.*

IN lofty efforts nothing is so detrimental to their success as an effeminate or tripping rhythm, such, you know, as the pyrrhic, trochaic, ditrochaic, all of which are simply dancing measures. For wherever the rhythm is very marked, there is sure to be an appearance of prettiness and frippery, and owing to the uniform structure, a languid effect of superficiality. But the worst result is, that just as in songs the notes distract the hearers from the sense, and force all attention to themselves; so compositions with too definite a rhythm, inspire the audience, not with the feeling of what is said, but only with its cadence; so that sometimes, foreknowing the

finale that must come, they beat time to the speaker, and as in a dance finish the measure by anticipation. But over-compression is equally unfavourable to style, when everything is condensed into short sentences with words of few syllables, and as it were dove-tailed and bolted by nail upon nail into a compact mass.

## XLII.

*On the proper extension of Periods.*

FURTHER I say that the affectation of very short periods detracts from sublimity, for this excessive contraction maims the dignity of expression. Let me not be understood here of a just and proper brevity, but of what is minced and clipped to an extravagant degree; for such a style does but mutilate the sense, whereas proper brevity takes us straight to the meaning. On the other hand it is clear that elongated periods, having their force dissipated by untimely extension, are feeble and lifeless.

## XLIII.

*That Sublimity is impaired by trivial expressions.*

TRIVIALITY in words, again, is a serious drawback to elevation of style.\* The storm in

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\* To pathos, as apart from sublimity, the humblest forms of speech may be made subservient. Take for instance, *The Lady Isabella's Tragedy* in *Percy's Reliques*, where the fair Isabella carries the fatal message from her treacherous step-mother:—

“ She straight into the kitchen went,  
 Her message for to tell;  
 And there she spied the master-cook,  
 Who did with malice swell.  
 Now, master-cook, it must be soe,  
 Do that which I thee tell:  
 You needes must dresse the milk-white doe,  
 Which you do knowe full well.  
 Then streight his cruell bloodye hands  
 He on the ladye layd:  
 Who quivering and shaking stands,  
 While thus to her he sayd:

Herodotus, for example, is very finely described as far as the conceptions go, but certainly there

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Thou art the doe that I must dresse ;  
 See here, behold my knife ;  
 For it is pointed presently  
 To ridd thee of thy life.

O then, cried out the scullion-boye,  
 As loud as loud might bee :

O save her life, good master-cook,  
 And make your pyes of mee !

For pityes sake do not destroye  
 My ladye with your knife ;  
 You know she is her father's joye,  
 For Christes sake save her life."

On the other hand, what an invincible repugnance exists between the Sublime and meanness of diction may be gathered from the almost uniform degradation which the loftiest passages of Hebrew poetry have suffered in metrical versions. I give, from Warton's *History of English Poetry*, a passage of Sternhold, Ps. lxxviii. 7, 8 :—

"When Thou didst march before Thy folk,  
 The Egyptians from among,  
 And brought them from the wilderness,  
 Which was both wide and long ;  
 The earth did quake, the rain poured down,  
 Heard were great claps of thunder,  
 The mount Sinai shook in such sort  
 As it would cleave in sunder."

are words in the description unworthy of the subject; and among them perhaps that of “the sea’s seething,”<sup>p</sup> as that “sea’s seething” by the difficulty of pronunciation considerably detracts from the dignity of the passage. Again, “the wind,” he says, “bated,”<sup>q</sup> and of those who were clutching about the wreck, that they “came to a disagreeable end.”<sup>r</sup> Now the word “bated” is common and undignified, and “disagreeable” is an inappropriate epithet for so great a calamity. In like manner also Theopompus, after a grand description of the Persian king’s descent upon Egypt, marred

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It is scarcely necessary to invite a comparison, or rather a contrast, of this poverty and feebleness of expression with the grandeur of the simple rendering in the Authorized Version:—

“O God, when Thou wentest before Thy people, when Thou didst march through the wilderness;

“The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; Sinai itself at the presence of God, the God of Israel.”

<sup>p</sup> *Book vii. ch. 188.*

<sup>q</sup> *Book vii. ch. 191.*

<sup>r</sup> *Book viii. ch. 13.*



it all by two or three undignified words. "For what city," saith he, "or what tribe of Asia was there that sent not ambassadors to the king? What was there that came not to him as a gift, of all that is goodly and precious in the produce of the earth or the workmanship of art? Were there not numbers of costly couches and coverlets in purple or white or embroidery, numbers of golden pavilions furnished with all that could be desired, numbers too of hangings and ottomans very costly? There also was plate of silver and the work of the goldsmith, there were goblets, and there were bowls, some of them set with stones of price, and others displaying elaborate and costly workmanship. And besides all this, myriads upon myriads of weapons were there, some Hellenic, some barbaric: and beasts of burden beyond counting, and fatted beasts for slaughter; and many bushels of pickles, and numbers of bags and sacks and charts of papyrus, and of all other things that could be wanted; and such abun-

dance of preserved meats of all kinds of animals that the heaps of them attained such proportions, that persons approaching from a distance might fancy them to be banks and mounds thrown up." He makes a sudden plunge from the magnificent to the mean, whereas his course ought to have been the very reverse. But by mixing up with the splendid description of the preparation at large his sacks and his pickles and his bags, he produced the general effect as it were of a kitchen. For take the actual case of those ornaments in the forefront, and suppose that among the vessels of gold and bowls inlaid with gems, and silver plate, and golden pavilions, and drinking-cups, some one were to bring and set your sacks and your bags, how unsightly would be the effect of such a proceeding! In precisely the same way words of that description, introduced out of season, become disfigurements and stigmas so to speak on the mode of expression. But it was at his option to have carried on through-

out his notion of banks and mounds heaped together; and for the rest of the provision by a turn of this kind, to have spoken of camels and a multitude of sumpter-beasts bearing all supplies for the table that could minister to luxury and delight; or, if he must speak of everything, rather than put things so barely, he might have called them heaps of all kinds of grain and of all daintiest delicacies and confectionery, and of all the sweetmeats of culinary artists and confectioners.\* For to

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\* We have an opportunity of seeing a similar description handled by Gibbon, in his account of the glory and magnificence of Chosroes at his favourite residence of Artemita or Dastagerd, beyond the Tigris. "The adjacent pastures were covered with flocks and herds; the paradise or park was replenished with pheasants, peacocks, ostriches, roebucks, and wild boars; and the noble game of lions and tigers was sometimes turned loose for the bolder pleasures of the chase. Nine hundred and sixty elephants were maintained for the use or splendour of the Great King; his tents and baggage were carried into the field by twelve thousand great camels and eight thousand of a smaller size; and the royal stables were filled with six thousand mules and horses,

introduce the mean and trivial into what is lofty and aspiring can only be justified by extreme necessity. Propriety requires that an author's words should be worthy of his subject, and that he should imitate Nature the artificer of man, who put not our uncomely parts within view, nor yet the purgings of the frame,

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among whom the names of Shebdiz and Barid are renowned for their speed or beauty. Six thousand guards successively mounted before the palace gate ; the service of the interior apartments was performed by twelve thousand slaves ; and in the number of three thousand virgins, the fairest of Asia, some happy concubine might console her master for the age or the indifference of Sira. The various treasures of gold, silver, gems, silk and aromatics were deposited in a hundred subterraneous vaults ; and the chamber *Badaverd* denoted the accidental gift of the winds which had wafted the spoils of Heraclius into one of the Syrian harbours of his rival. The voice of flattery, and perhaps of fiction, is not ashamed to compute the thirty thousand rich hangings that adorned the walls ; the forty thousand columns of silver, or more probably of marble and plated wood, that supported the roof ; and the thousand globes of gold suspended in the dome, to imitate the motions of the planets and the constellations of the zodiac."—The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ch. xlvi.

but, as she might, concealed them, and, in the words of Xenophon, put the ducts thereof as far as possible out of the way, nowhere causing disfigurement to the general beauty of the creature. And now there is no need precisely to specify all that is prejudicial to style, for, all that makes it noble and sublime having been already set forth, it is clear that the contrary thereto will be most adapted to its lowering and degradation.

## XLIV.

*On the decline of Genius in the Author's own age.*

ONE thing however remains, which, my dear and valued friend, because of your desire for learning, I shall not hesitate to add and explain clearly. It is that difficulty which one of the philosophers very recently propounded. "I wonder," said he, "as doubtless do many others, how it is that in our age there is plenty of rhetorical power and forensic ability, pungency and readiness, fluency and charm of style, but none now, or almost none, of the true Sublime, the really majestic order of genius. Such a dearth is there over all the world of oratory proper! Can it be," said he, "that we are to believe the common murmur, that democracy is the fostering nurse of genius, with whom, almost exclusively, the race of orators flourished and

with whom it died away ? For it is the province, they say, of freedom to encourage the thoughts of the lofty-minded and to cheer them on, to promote the eagerness of emulous rivalry and the generous ambition to excel. Moreover by the prizes proposed under free constitutions the intellectual advantages of the orators time after time are exercised and sharpened ; they have as it were their edges whetted ; they shine forth, as might be expected, free with the freedom whose cause they serve. But we of the present day," said he, " seem to learn from childhood the discipline of a moderate slavery, having been from our tenderest years well-nigh swathed in its manners and customs, never tasting oratory's noblest and purest fountain (liberty, I mean," he said), " for which reason we turn out nothing but magnificent flatterers." For this cause he held that any other profession was tenable even by the menial class, but that a slave could never be an orator ; for, on the first effort, a long familiarity with enforced

reticence and dungeon-cells and continual thrashings bubbles up and leaves the orator tongue-tied, for, as Homer says,—

“The half of valour goes when slavery comes.”\*

“Precisely then,” saith he, “if the thing may be credited, as the cases, in which the so-called Pygmies or Hop-o’-my-thumbs are brought up, not only hinder the growth of the prisoners, but even by the bands surrounding their bodies contract their original dimensions; so might one represent all slavery, be it ever so moderate, as an encasing of the soul and neither more nor less than a general prison.”\*

I however, taking him up, said, It is easy, my good friend, and quite natural for every generation to find fault with its own position; but may it not be that while the development of fine genius is indeed hindered by the peaceable

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\* See the comment upon this passage in Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. ii. p. 195, ed. Milman.

\* *Odyssey*, xvii. 322.



state of the world, it is far more so by this boundless war that moves our lusts at its will, and further by these inflictions which hold this our age at their mercy, harrying and spoiling it without restraint? For the fondness for gain for which we are all now-a-days morbidly insatiable, and the fondness for pleasure, bring us into bondage, or rather, so to phrase it, cause a foundering of our lives, in which all hands are lost. Devotion to money is a degrading infirmity, devotion to pleasure a most degraded one. I cannot find then, after extravagantly honouring, or, more truly, deifying vast wealth, when its attendant evils invade our souls, how it is possible to deny them entrance. For, hard upon enormous and excessive wealth, and, so to speak, keeping step with it, follows lavish expenditure, and when the one throws open the gateways of cities and mansions, into which it enters, there also the other makes its home. Then, having established their footing in men's

lives, they build themselves nests, as philosophers tell us, and soon falling to procreation, they engender haughtiness and pride and luxury, not falsely fathered upon them, but their very and legitimate offspring. But if one suffers also these descendants of wealth to attain maturity, speedily do they breed in the souls they occupy tyrants inexorable, insolence and licence and shamelessness. For these results must needs follow, and men can no more gaze upward, no more can reputation be of account, but the ruin of such lives must step by step be brought round to its close, while all nobility and grandeur of soul must decline and wither down and become inconsiderable, whenever men unduly exalt the perishable and sensual parts of their nature, and fail to cherish those which are immortal. For a man cannot, when he has taken a bribe for his decision,—he cannot, I say, be an impartial and upright judge in the cause of right and honour. For one so corrupted can see no

honour or right but in what advantages himself. But where we all give over our lives, now without intermission, to the control of bribery and legacy-hunting and seeking for dead men's places, while we sell our very souls for gain, no matter whence, being enslaved without exception by the love of money-getting, do we still, I ask, expect to find, amid all this pestilential corruption of life, judges of the sublime or the immortal, free and uncorrupted, uninfluenced in their votes by the passion for gain? But perhaps for such a state of society, and that state is our own, subjection is better than freedom; since the covetous feelings of men, discharged in a mass upon their neighbours, like beasts let loose from a den, might even set the whole world on fire with the miseries that would follow. In short, the present standard of mind and talent, I observed, was largely due to that indifference in which we all, with few exceptions, pass our lives, never labouring, never learning, except

with the single view to applause or pleasure, but doing nothing for the just ambition and the merited renown of general usefulness.

From these points it would be best to pass on now to the sequel,—the discussion, I mean, of the passions, about which I promised of my own accord to write in a separate treatise, engrossing as I think they do no unimportant share in composition generally, but especially in the Sublime.



## APPENDIX.

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*The opinions of Pope, Addison, and Gibbon upon  
Longinus, with the historical account of  
his heroic death.*

IN the Essay on Criticism, Pope pronounces a noble panegyric on his Greek predecessor in the art:—

“Thee, bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,  
And bless their critic with a poet’s fire:  
An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,  
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just;  
Whose own example strengthens all his laws;  
And is himself that great Sublime he draws.”

Of Addison it is sufficient to say that he repeatedly refers to Longinus, less as an admired brother in his own profession than as a lawgiver

without appeal. He loves to enforce his precepts; he adorns them with lively illustrations by his own exquisite taste; and the purity of style, which commends to successive generations the charming genius of Addison himself, no doubt is largely indebted to the wisdom and well-apprehended lessons of the earlier critic.

The estimate by Gibbon, in general so sparing of his praise, is no less eulogistic, when he tells us that "the sublime Longinus, in the court of a Syrian queen, preserved the spirit of ancient Athens." That Syrian lady was Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Richly endowed with personal charms, a manly understanding, and an heroic temper, she confronted, towards the close of the Third Century, the power of the Roman Empire. Amidst the cares of government, she profited by the tuition of Longinus, by his friendship and his counsels. But being at last made captive by the Romans, "the courage of

Zenobia," Gibbon relates, "deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamours of the soldiers who called aloud for her immediate execution, forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra, which she had proposed as her model, and ignominiously purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels, which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to elevate and harmonize the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends."





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